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CECILIA,

OR

MEMOIRS

OF AN

HEIRESS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF EVELINA.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

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CECILIA.

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER I.

A LETTER.

AS ſoon as Mrs. Charlton was acquainted with the departure of young Delvile, ſhe returned to Cecilia, impatient to be informed what had paſſed. The narration ſhe heard both hurt and aſtoniſhed her; that Cecilia, the heireſs of ſuch a fortune, the poſſeſſor of ſo much beauty, deſcended of a worthy family, and formed and educated to grace a noble one, ſhould be rejected by people to whom her wealth would be moſt uſeful, and only in ſecret have their alliance propoſed to her, ſhe deemed an indignity that called for nothing but reſentment, and approved and enforced the reſolution of her young friend to reſiſt all ſolicitations which Mr. and Mrs. Delvile did not ſecond themſelves.

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About two hours after Delvile was gone, his letter arrived. Cecilia opened it with trepidation, and read as follows:

To Miss Beverley.

September 20, 1779.

What could be the apprehenſions, the ſuſpicions of Miſs Beverley, when ſo earneſtly ſhe prohibited my writing? From a temper ſo unguarded as mine, could ſhe fear any ſubtlety of doctrine? Is my character ſo little known to her, that ſhe can think me capable of craft or duplicity? Had I even the deſire, I have neither the addreſs nor the patience to practiſe them; no, loveliеſt Miſs Beverley, though ſometimes by vehemence I may incautiouſly offend, by ſophiſtry, believe me, I never ſhall injure: my ambition, as I have told you, is to convince, not beguile, and my arguments ſhall be ſimple as my profeſſions ſhall be ſincere.

Yet how again may I venture to mention a propoſal which ſo lately almoſt before you had heard you rejected? Suffer me, however, to aſſure you it reſulted neither from inſenſibility to your delicacy, nor to my own duty; I made it, on the contrary, with that reluctance and timidity which were given me by an apprehenſion that both ſeemed to be offended by it:—but alas! already I have ſaid what with grief I muſt repeat, I have no reſource, no alternative,

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ternative, between receiving the honour of your hand in ſecret or foregoing you for ever.

You will wonder, you may well wonder at ſuch a declaration; and again that ſevere renunciation with which you wounded me, will tremble on your lips.—Oh, there let it ſtop! nor let the air again be agitated with ſounds ſo diſcordant!

In that cruel and heart-breaking moment when I tore myſelf from you at Delvile-Caſtle, I confeſſed to you the reaſon of my flight, and I determined to ſee you no more. I named not to you, then, my family, the potency of my own objections againſt daring to ſolicit your favour, rendering theirs immaterial: my own are now wholly removed, — but theirs remain in full force.

My father, deſcended of a race which though decaying in wealth, is unſubdued in pride, conſiders himſelf as the guardian of the honour of his houſe, to which he holds the name of his anceſtors inſeparably annexed: my mother born of the ſame family, and bred to the ſame ideas, has ſtrengthened this opinion by giving it the ſanction of her own.

Such being their ſentiments, you will not, madam, be ſurpriſed that their only ſon, the ſole inheritor of their fortune, and ſole object of their expectations, ſhould early have admitted the ſame. Indeed almoſt the firſt leſſon I was taught was that of reverencing the family from which I am deſcended, and the

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name to which I am born. I was bid conſider myſelf as its only remaining ſupport, and ſedulouſly inſtructed neither to act nor think but with a view to its aggrandizement and dignity.

Thus, unchecked by ourſelves, and uncontroled by the world, this haughty ſelf-importance acquired by time a ſtrength, and by mutual encouragement a firmneſs, which Miſs Beverley alone could poſſibly, I believe, have ſhaken! What, therefore, was my ſecret alarm, when firſt I was conſcious of the force of her attractions, and found my mind wholly occupied with admiration of her excellencies! All that pride could demand, and all to which ambition could aſpire, all that happineſs could covet, or the moſt ſcrupulous delicacy exact, in her I found united; and while my heart was enſlaved by her charms, my underſtanding exulted in its fetters. —— Yet to forfeit my name, to give up for ever a family which upon me reſted its lateſt expectations, —— Honour, I thought, forbad it, propriety and manly ſpirit revolted at the ſacrifice. The renunciation of my birth-right ſeemed a deſertion of the poſt in which I was ſtationed: I forbore, therefore, even in my wiſhes, to ſolicit your favour, and vigorouſly determined to fly you as dangerous to my peace, becauſe unattainable without diſhonour.

Such was the intended regulation of my conduct at the time I received Biddulph's letter:

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ter: in three days I was to leave England; my father, with much perſuaſion, had conſented to my departure; my mother, who penetrated into my motives, had never oppoſed it: but how great was the change wrought upon my mind by reading that letter! my ſteadineſs forſook me, my reſolution wavered; yet I thought him deceived, and attributed his ſuſpicions to jealouſy: but ſtill, Fidelle I knew was miſſing—and to hear he was your darling companion——was it poſſible to quit England in a ſtate of ſuch uncertainty? to be harraſſed in diſtant climates with conjectures I might then never ſatisfy? No; I told my friends I muſt viſit Biddulph before I left the kingdom, and promiſing to return to them in three or four days, I haſtily ſet out for Suffolk, and reſted not till I arrived at Mrs. Charlton's.

What a ſcene there awaited me! to behold the loved miſtreſs of my heart, the oppoſed, yet reſiſtleſs object of my fondeſt admiration, careſſing an animal ſhe knew to be mine, mourning over him his maſter's ill health, and ſweetly recommending to him fidelity.——Ah! forgive the retroſpection, I will dwell on it no longer. Little, indeed, had I imagined with what ſoftneſs the dignity of Miſs Beverley was blended, though always conſcious that her virtues, her attractions, and her excellencies, would reflect luſtre upon the higheſt ſtation to which human grandeur could

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raiſe her, and would ſtill be more exalted than her rank, though that were the moſt eminent upon earth. — And had there been a thouſand, and ten thouſand obſtacles to oppoſe my addreſſing her, vigorouſly and undauntedly would I have combated with them all, in preference to yielding to this ſingle objection.

Let not the frankneſs of this declaration irritate you, but rather let it ſerve to convince you of the ſincerity of what follows: various as are the calamities of life which may render me miſerable, YOU only, among even its choſen felicities, have power to make me happy. Fame, honours, wealth, ambition, were inſufficient without you; all chance of internal peace, and every ſofter hope is now centered in your favour, and to loſe you, from whatever cauſe, enſures me wretchedneſs unmitigated.

With reſpect therefore to myſelf, the die is finally caſt, and the conflict between boſom felicity and family pride is deliberately over. This name which ſo vainly I have cheriſhed and ſo painfully ſupported, I now find inadequate to recompenſe me for the ſacrifice which its preſervation requires. I part with it, I own, with regret that the ſurrender is neceſſary; yet it is rather an imaginary than an actual evil, and though a deep wound to pride, no offence to morality.

Thus

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Thus have I laid open to you my whole heart, confeſſed my perplexities, acknowledged my vain-glory, and expoſed with equal ſincerity the ſources of my doubts, and the motives of my deciſion: but now, indeed, how to proceed I know not; the difficulties which are yet to encounter I fear to enumerate, and the petition I have to urge I have ſcarce courage to mention.

My family, miſtaking ambition for honour, and rank for dignity, have long planned a ſplendid connection for me, to which though my invariable repugnance has ſtopt any advances, their wiſhes and their views immovably adhere. I am but too certain they will now liſten to no other. I dread, therefore, to make a trial where I deſpair of ſucceſs; I know not how to riſk a prayer with thoſe who may ſilence me by a command.

In a ſituation ſo deſperate, what then remains? Muſt I make an application with a certainty of rejection, and then mock all authority by acting in defiance of it? Or, harder taſk yet! relinquiſh my deareſt hopes when no longer perſuaded of their impropriety? Ah! ſweeteſt Miſs Beverley, end the ſtruggle at once! My happineſs, my peace, are wholly in your power, for the moment of our union ſecures them for life.

It may ſeem to you ſtrange that I ſhould thus purpoſe to brave the friends whom I venture not to entreat; but from my knowledge

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of their characters and sentiments I am certain I have no other resource. Their favourite principles were too early imbibed to be now at this late season eradicated. Slaves that we all are to habits, and dupes to appearances, jealous guardians of our pride, to which our comfort is sacrificed, and even our virtue made subservient, what conviction can be offered by reason, to notions that exist but by prejudice? They have been cherished too long for rhetoric to remove them, they can only be expelled by all-powerful necessity. Life is, indeed, too brief, and success too precarious, to trust, in any case where happiness is concerned, the extirpation of deep-rooted and darling opinions, to the slow-working influence of argument and disquisition.

Yet bigotted as they are to rank and family, they adore Miss Beverley, and though their consent to the forfeiture of their name might for-ever be denied, when once they beheld her the head and ornament of their house, her elegance and accomplishments, joined to the splendour of her fortune, would speedily make them forget the plans which now wholly absorb them. Their sense of honour is in nothing inferior to their sense of high birth; your condescension, therefore, would be felt by them in its fullest force, and though, during their first surprise, they might be irritated against their son, they would make it the study of their lives, that the lady who for him had

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had done so much, should never, through their means, repine for herself.

With regard to settlements, the privacy of our union would not affect them: one confident we must unavoidably trust, and I would depositе in the hands of whatever person you would name, a bond by which I would engage myself to settle both your fortune and my own, according to the arbitration of our mutual friends.

The time for secrecy, though painful, would be short, and even from the altar, if you desired it, I would hasten to Delvile-Castle. Not one of my friends should you see till they waited upon you themselves to solicit your presence at their house, till our residence elsewhere was fixed.

"Oh, loveliest Cecilia, from a dream of a happiness so sweet awaken me not! from a plan of felicity so attractive turn not away! If one part of it is unpleasant, reject not therefore all; and since without some drawback no earthly bliss is attainable, do not, by a refinement too scrupulous for the short period of our existence, deny yourself that delight which your benevolence will afford you, in snatching from the pangs of unavailing regret and misery, the gratefullest of men in the

humblest and most devoted
of your servants,
Mortimer Delvile.

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Cecilia read and re-read this letter, but with a perturbation of mind that made her little able to weigh its contents. Paragraph by paragraph her ſentiments varied, and her determination was changed: the earneſtneſs of his ſupplication now ſoftened her into compliance, the acknowledged pride of his family now irritated her into reſentment, and the confeſſion of his own regret now ſickened her into deſpondence. She meant in an immediate anſwer to have written a final diſmiſſion; but though proof againſt his entreaties, becauſe not convinced by his arguments, there was ſomething in the concluſion of his letter that ſtaggered her reſolution.

Thoſe ſcruples and that refinement againſt which he warned her, ſhe herſelf thought might be overſtrained, and to gratify unneceſſary punctilio, the ſhort period of exiſtence be rendered cauſeleſsly unhappy. He had truly ſaid that their union would be no offence to morality; and with reſpect merely to pride, why ſhould that be ſpared? He knew he poſſeſſed her heart, ſhe had long been certain of his, her character had early gained the affection of his mother, and the eſſential ſervice which an income ſuch as her's muſt do the family, would ſoon be felt too powerfully to make her connection with it regretted.

Theſe reflections were ſo pleaſant ſhe knew not how to diſcard them; and the conſciouſneſs that her ſecret was betrayed not only to himſelf,

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himſelf, but to Mr. Biddulph, Lord Ernolf, Lady Honoria Pemberton, and Mrs. Delvile, gave them additional force, by making it probable ſhe was yet more widely ſuſpected.

But ſtill her delicacy and her principles revolted againſt a conduct of which the ſecrecy ſeemed to imply the impropriety. "How ſhall I meet Mrs. Delvile," cried ſhe, "after an action ſo clandeſtine? How, after praiſe ſuch as ſhe has beſtowed upon me, bear the ſeverity of her eye, when ſhe thinks I have ſeduced from her the obedience of her ſon! A ſon who is the ſole ſolace and firſt hope of her exiſtence, whoſe virtues make all her happineſs, and whoſe filial piety is her only glory!—And well may ſhe glory in a ſon ſuch as Delvile! Nobly has he exerted himſelf in ſituations the moſt difficult, his family and his ideas of honour he has preferred to his peace and health, he has fulfilled with ſpirit and integrity the various, the conflicting duties of life. Even now, perhaps, in his preſent application, he may merely think himſelf bound by knowing me no longer free, and his generous ſenſibility to the weakneſs he has diſcovered, without any of the conviction to which he pretends, may have occaſioned this propoſal!"

A ſuggeſtion ſo mortifying again changed her determination; and the tears of Henrietta Belfield, with the letter which ſhe had ſurpriſed in her hand recurring to her memory, all her

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her thoughts turned once more upon rejecting him for ever.

In this fluctuating state of mind she found writing impracticable; while uncertain what to wish, to decide was impossible. She disdained coquetry, she was superior to trifling, the candour and openness of Delvile had merited all her sincerity, and therefore while any doubt remained with herself, she held it unworthy her character to tell him she had none.

Mrs. Charlton, upon reading the letter, became again the advocate of Delvile; the frankness with which he had stated his difficulties, assured her of his probity, and by explaining his former conduct, satisfied her with the rectitude of his future intentions. "Do not, therefore, my dear child," cried she, "become the parent of your own misery, by refusing him; he deserves you alike from his principles and his affection, and the task would both be long and melancholy to disengage him from your heart. I see not, however, the least occasion for the disgrace of a private marriage; I know not any family to which you would not be an honour, and those who feel not your merit, are little worth pleasing. Let Mr. Delvile, therefore, apply openly to his friends, and if they refuse their consent, be their prejudices their reward. You are freed from all obligations where caprice only can raise objections, and you may

then,

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then, in the face of the world, vindicate your choice."

The wiſhes of Cecilia accorded with this advice, though the general tenour of Delvile's letter gave her little reaſon to expect he would follow it.

CHAP. II.

A Discussion.

THE day paſt away, and Cecilia had yet written no anſwer; the evening came, and her reſolution was ſtill unfixed. Delvile, at length, was again announced; and though ſhe dreaded truſting herſelf to his entreaties, the neceſſity of haſtening ſome deciſion deterred her from refuſing to ſee him.

Mrs. Charlton was with her when he entered the room; he attempted at firſt ſome general converſation, though the anxiety of his mind was ſtrongly pictured upon his face. Cecilia endeavoured alſo to talk upon common topics, though her evident embarraſſment ſpoke the abſence of her thoughts.

Delvile at length, unable any longer to bear ſuſpence, turned to Mrs. Charlton, and ſaid,

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ſaid, "You are probably acquainted, madam, with the purport of the letter I had the honour of ſending to Miſs Beverley this morning?"

"Yes, Sir," anſwered the old lady, "and you need deſire little more than that her opinion of it may be as favourable as mine."

Delvile bowed and thanked her; and looking at Cecilia, to whom he ventured not to ſpeak, he perceived in her countenance a mixture of dejection and confuſion, that told him whatever might be her opinion, it had by no means encreaſed her happineſs.

"But why, Sir," ſaid Mrs. Charlton, "ſhould you be thus ſure of the diſapprobation of your friends? had you not better hear what they have to ſay?"

"I *know*, madam, what they have to ſay," returned he; "for their language and their principles have been invariable from my birth: to apply to them, therefore, for a conceſſion which I am certain they will not grant, were only a cruel device to lay all my miſery to their account."

"And if they are ſo perverſe, they deſerve from you nothing better," ſaid Mrs. Charlton; "ſpeak to them, however; you will then have done your duty; and if they are obſtinately unjuſt, you will have acquired a right to act for yourſelf."

"To mock their authority," anſwered Delvile, "would be more offenſive than to oppoſe

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oppose it; to solicit their approbation, and then act in defiance of it, might justly provoke their indignation.—No; if at last I am reduced to appeal to them, by their decision I must abide."

To this Mrs. Charlton could make no answer, and in a few minutes she left the room.

"And is such, also," said Delvile, "the opinion of Miss Beverley? has she doomed me to be wretched, and does she wish that doom to be signed by my nearest friends!"

"If your friends, Sir," said Cecilia, "are so undoubtedly inflexible, it were madness, upon any plan, to risk their displeasure."

"To entreaty," he answered, "they will be inflexible, but not to forgiveness. My father, though haughty, dearly, even passionately loves me; my mother, though high-spirited, is just, noble, and generous. She is, indeed, the most exalted of women, and her power over my mind I am unaccustomed to resist. Miss Beverley alone seems born to be her daughter—"

"No, no," interrupted Cecilia, "as her daughter she rejects me!"

"She loves, she adores you!" cried he, warmly; "and were I not certain she feels your excellencies as they ought to be felt, my veneration for you *both* should even yet spare you my present supplication. But you would become, I am certain, the first blessing

of

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of her life; in you she would behold all the felicity of her son,—his restoration to health, to his country, to his friends!"

"O Sir," cried Cecilia, with emotion, "how deep a trench of real misery do you sink, in order to raise this pile of fancied happiness! But I will not be responsible for your offending such a mother; scarcely can you honour her yourself more than I do; and I here declare most solemnly—"

"O stop!" interrupted Delvile, "and resolve not till you have heard me. Would you, were she no more, were my father also no more, would you yet persist in refusing me?"

"Why should you ask me?" said Cecilia, blushing; "you would then be your own agent, and perhaps—"

She hesitated, and Delvile vehemently exclaimed, "Oh make me not a monster! force me not to desire the death of the very beings by whom I live! weaken not the bonds of affection by which they are endeared to me, and compel me not to wish them no more as the sole barriers to my happiness!"

"Heaven forbid!" cried Cecilia; "could I believe you so impious, I should suffer little indeed in desiring your eternal absence."

"Why then only upon their extinction must I rest my hope of your favour?"

Cecilia,

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Cecilia, ſtaggered and diſtreſſed by this queſtion, could make no anſwer. Delvile, perceiving her embarraſſment, redoubled his urgency; and before ſhe had power to recollect herſelf, ſhe had almoſt conſented to his plan, when Henrietta Belfield ruſhing in her memory, ſhe haſtily exclaimed, "One doubt there is, which I know not how to mention, but ought to have cleared up;—you are acquainted with—you remember Miſs Belfield?"

"Certainly; but what of Miſs Belfield that can raiſe a doubt in the mind of Miſs Beverley?"

Cecilia coloured, and was ſilent.

"Is it poſſible," continued he, "you could ever for an inſtant ſuppoſe—but I cannot even name a ſuppoſition ſo foreign to all poſſibility."

"She is ſurely very amiable?"

"Yes," anſwered he, "ſhe is innocent, gentle, and engaging; and I heartily wiſh ſhe were in a better ſituation."

"Did you ever occaſionally, or by any accident, correſpond with her?"

"Never in my life."

"And were not your viſits to the brother *ſometimes*——"

"Have a care," interrupted he, laughing, "leſt I reverſe the queſtion, and aſk if your viſits to the ſiſter were not *ſometimes* for the brother! But what does this mean? Could

Miſs

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Miſs Beverley imagine that *after* knowing her, the charms of Miſs Belfield could put me in any danger?"

Cecilia, bound in delicacy and friendſhip not to betray the tender and truſting Henrietta, and internally ſatisfied of his innocence by his frankneſs, evaded any anſwer, and would now have done with the ſubject; but Delvile, eager wholly to exculpate himſelf, though by no means diſpleaſed at an enquiry which ſhewed ſo much intereſt in his affections, continued his explanation.

"Miſs Belfield has, I grant, an attraction in the ſimplicity of her manners which charms by its ſingularity: her heart, too, ſeems all purity, and her temper all ſoftneſs. I have not, you find, been blind to her merit; on the contrary, I have both admired and pitied her. But far indeed is ſhe removed from all chance of rivalry in her heart! A character ſuch as hers for a while is irreſiſtably alluring; but when its novelty is over, ſimplicity uninformed becomes wearisome, and ſoftneſs without dignity is too indiſcriminate to give delight. We ſigh for entertainment, when cloyed by mere ſweetneſs; and heavily drags on the load of life when the companion of our ſocial hours wants ſpirit, intelligence, and cultivation. With Miſs Beverley all theſe—"

"Talk not of all theſe," cried Cecilia, "when one ſingle obſtacle has power to render them valueleſs."

"But

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"But now," cried he, "that obſtacle is ſurmounted."

"Surmounted only for a moment! for even in your Letter this morning you confeſs the regret with which it fills you."

"And why ſhould I deceive you? why pretend to think with pleaſure, or even with indifference, of an obſtacle which has had thus long the power to make me miſerable? But where is happineſs without allay? Is perfect bliſs the condition of humanity? Oh if we refuſe to taſte it till in its laſt ſtate of refinement, how ſhall the cup of evil be ever from our lips?"

"How indeed!" ſaid Cecilia, with a ſigh; "the regret, I believe, will remain eternally upon your mind, and ſhe, perhaps, who ſhould cauſe, might ſoon be taught to partake of it."

"O Miſs Beverley! how have I merited this ſeverity! did I make my propoſals lightly? Did I ſuffer my eagerneſs to conquer my reaſon? Have I not, on the contrary, been ſteady and conſiderate; neither biaſſed by paſſion nor betrayed by tenderneſs?"

"And yet in what," ſaid Cecilia, "conſiſts this boaſted ſteadineſs? I perceived it indeed, at Delvile Caſtle; but here—"

"The pride of heart which ſupported me there," cried he, "will ſupport me no longer; what ſuſtained my firmneſs, but your apparent ſeverity? What enabled me to

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to fly you, but your invariable coldneſs? The rigour with which I trampled upon my feelings I thought fortitude and ſpirit,—but I knew not then the pitying ſympathy of Cecilia!"

"O that you knew it not yet!" cried ſhe, bluſhing; "before the fatal accident, you thought of me, I believe, in a manner far more honourable."

"Impoſſible! differently, I thought of you, but never better, never ſo well as now. I then repreſented you all lovely in beauty, all perfect in goodneſs and virtue, but it was virtue in its higheſt majeſty, not, as now, blended with the ſofteſt ſenſibility."

"Alas!" ſaid Cecilia, "how the portrait is faded!"

"No, it is but more from the life: it is the ſublimity of an angel, mingled with all that is attractive in woman. But who is the friend we may venture to truſt? To whom may I give bond? And from whom may I receive a treaſure which for the reſt of my life will conſtitute all its felicity?"

"Where can *I*," cried Cecilia, "find a friend, who, in this critical moment, will inſtruct me how to act!"

"You will find one," anſwered he, "in your own boſom: aſk but yourſelf this plain queſtion: will any virtue be offended by your honouring me with your hand?"

"Yes; duty will be offended, ſince it is contrary to the will of your parents."

"But

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"But is there no time for emancipation? Am not I of an age to chooſe for myſelf the partner of my life? Will not you in a few days be the uncontrolled miſtreſs of your actions? Are we not both independent? Your ample fortune all your own, and the eſtates of my father ſo entailed, they muſt unavoidably be mine?"

"And are theſe," ſaid Cecilia, "conſiderations to ſet us free from our duty?"

"No, but they are circumſtances to relieve us from ſlavery. Let me not offend you if I am ſtill more explicit. When no law, human or divine, can be injured by our union, when one motive of pride is all that can be oppoſed to a thouſand motives of convenience and happineſs, why ſhould we *both* be made unhappy, merely leſt that pride ſhould loſe its gratification?"

This queſtion, which ſo often and ſo angrily ſhe had revolved in her own mind, again ſilenced her; and Delvile, with the eagerneſs of approaching ſucceſs, redoubled his ſolicitations.

"Be mine," he cried, "ſweeteſt Cecilia, and all will go well. To refer me to my friends is, effectually, to baniſh me for ever. Spare me, then, the unavailing taſk; and ſave me from the reſiſtleſs entreaties of a mother, whoſe every deſire I have held ſacred, whoſe wiſh has been my law, and whoſe commands I have implicitly,

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implicitly, invariably obeyed! Oh, generously save me from the dreadful alternative of wounding her maternal heart by a peremptory refusal, or of torturing my own with pangs to which it is unequal by an extorted obedience!"

"Alas!" cried Cecilia, "how utterly impossible I can relieve you!"

"And why? once mine, irrevocably mine——"

"No, that would but irritate,—and irritate past hope of pardon."

"Indeed you are mistaken: to your merit they are far from insensible, and your fortune is just what they wish. Trust me, therefore, when I assure you that their displeasure, which both respect and justice will guard them from ever shewing *you*, will soon die wholly away. I speak not merely from my hopes; in judging my own friends, I consider human nature in general. Inevitable evils are ever best supported. It is suspense, it is hope that make the food of misery: certainty is always endured, because known to be past amendment, and felt to give defiance to struggling."

"And can you," cried Cecilia, "with reasoning so desperate be satisfied?"

"In a situation so extraordinary as ours," answered he, "there is no other. The voice of the world at large will be all in our favour. Our union neither injures our fortunes, nor taints our morality: with the character of each

the

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the other is satisfied, and both must be alike exculpated from mercenary views of interest, or romantic contempt of poverty; what right have we, then, to repine at an objection which, however potent, is single? Surely none. Oh if wholly unchecked were the happiness I now have in view, if no foul storm sometimes lowered over the prospect, and for a moment obscured its brightness; how could my heart find room for joy so superlative? The whole world might rise against me, as the first man in it who had nothing left to wish!"

Cecilia, whose own hopes aided this reasoning, found not much to oppose to it; and with little more of entreaty, and still less of argument, Delvile at length obtained her consent to his plan. Fearfully, indeed, and with unfeigned reluctance she gave it, but it was the only alternative with a separation for ever, to which she held not the necessity adequate to the pain.

The thanks of Delvile were as vehement as had been his entreaties, which yet, however, were not at an end; the concession she had made was imperfect, unless its performance were immediate, and he now endeavoured to prevail with her to be his before the expiration of a week.

Here, however, his task ceased to be difficult; Cecilia, as ingenuous by nature as she was honourable from principle, having once brought her mind to con-

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ſent to his propoſal, ſought not, by ſtudied difficulties to enhance the value of her compliance: the great point reſolved upon, ſhe held all elſe of too little importance for a conteſt.

Mrs. Charlton was now called in, and acquainted with the reſult of their conference. Her approbation by no means followed the ſcheme of privacy; yet ſhe was too much rejoiced in ſeeing her young friend near the period of her long ſuſpenſe and uneaſineſs, to oppoſe any plan which might forward their termination.

Delvile then again begged to know what male confident might be entruſted with their project.

Mr. Monckton immediately occurred to Cecilia, though the certainty of his ill-will to the cauſe made all application to him diſagreeable: but his long and ſteady friendſhip for her, his readineſs to counſel and aſſiſt her, and the promiſes ſhe had occaſionally made, not to act without his advice, all concurred to perſuade her that in a matter of ſuch importance, ſhe owed to him her confidence, and ſhould be culpable to proceed without it. Upon him, therefore, ſhe fixed; yet finding in herſelf a repugnance inſuperable to acquainting him with her ſituation, ſhe agreed that Delvile, who inſtantly propoſed to be her meſſenger, ſhould open to him the affair, and prepare him for their meeting.

Delvile

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Delvile then, rapid in thought and fertile in expedients, with a celerity and vigour which bore down all objections, arranged the whole conduct of the buſineſs. To avoid ſuſpicion, he determined inſtantly to quit her, and, as ſoon as he had executed his commiſſion with Mr. Monckton, to haſten to London, that the neceſſary preparations for their marriage might be made with diſpatch and ſecreſy. He purpoſed, alſo, to find out Mr. Belfield, that he might draw up the bond with which he meant to entruſt Mr. Monckton. This meaſure Cecilia would have oppoſed, but he refuſed to liſten to her. Mrs. Charlton herſelf, though her age and infirmities had long confined her to her own houſe, gratified Cecilia upon this critical occaſion with conſenting to accompany her to the altar. Mr. Monckton was depended upon for giving her away, and a church in London was the place appointed for the performance of the ceremony. In three days the principal difficulties to the union would be removed by Cecilia's coming of age, and in five days it was agreed they ſhould actually meet in town. The moment they were married, Delvile promiſed to ſet off for the Caſtle, while in another chaiſe, Cecilia returned to Mrs. Charlton's.

This ſettled, he conjured her to be punctual, and earneſtly recommending himſelf to her ... elity and affection, he bid her adieu.

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CHAP. III.

A RETROSPECTION.

LEFT now to herself, sensations unfelt before filled the heart of Cecilia. All that had passed for a while appeared a dream; her ideas were indistinct, her memory was confused, her faculties seemed all out of order, and she had but an imperfect consciousness either of the transaction in which she had just been engaged, or of the promise she had bound herself to fulfil: even truth from imagination she scarcely could separate; all was darkness and doubt, inquietude and disorder!

But when at length her recollection more clearly returned, and her situation appeared to her such as it really was, divested alike of false terrors or delusive expectations, she found herself still farther removed from tranquillity.

Hitherto, though no stranger to sorrow, which the sickness and early loss of her friends had first taught her to feel, and which the subsequent anxiety of her own heart had since instructed her to bear, she had yet invariably possessed the consolation of self-approving reflections: but the step she was now about to take, all her principles opposed; it terrified her as undutiful, it shocked her as clandestine, and

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and ſcarce was Delvile out of ſight, before ſhe regretted her conſent to it as the loſs of her ſelf-eſteem, and believed, even if a reconciliation took place, the remembrance of a wilful fault would ſtill follow her, blemiſh in her own eyes the character ſhe had hoped to ſupport, and be a conſtant allay to her happineſs, by telling her how unworthily ſhe had obtained it.

Where frailty has never been voluntary, nor error ſtubborn, where the pride of early integrity is unſubdued, and the firſt purity of innocence is inviolate, how fearfully delicate, how "tremblingly alive" is the conſcience of man! ſtrange, that what in its firſt ſtate is ſo tender, can in its laſt become ſo callous!

Compared with the general lot of human miſery, Cecilia had ſuffered nothing; but compared with the exaltation of ideal happineſs, ſhe had ſuffered much; willingly, however, would ſhe again have borne all that had diſtreſſed her, experienced the ſame painful ſuſpenſe, endured the ſame melancholy parting, and gone through the ſame cruel taſk of combating inclination with reaſon, to have relieved her virtuous mind from the new-born and intolerable terror of conſcientious reproaches.

The equity of her notions permitted her not from the earneſtneſs of Delvile's entreaties to draw any palliation for her conſent to his propoſal; ſhe was conſcious that but for her own

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too greatly facility thoſe entreaties would have been ineffectual, ſince ſhe well knew how little from any other of her admirers they would have availed.

But chiefly her affliction and repentance hung upon Mrs. Delvile, whom ſhe loved, reverenced and honoured, whom ſhe dreaded to offend, and whom ſhe well knew expected from her even exemplary virtue. Her praiſes, her partiality, her confidence in her character, which hitherto had been her pride, ſhe now only recollected with ſhame and with ſadneſs. The terror of the firſt interview never ceaſed to be preſent to her; ſhe ſhrunk even in imagination from her wrath-darting eye; ſhe felt ſtung by pointed ſatire, and ſubdued by cold contempt.

Yet to diſappoint Delvile ſo late, by forfeiting a promiſe ſo poſitively accorded; to trifle with a man who to her had been uniformly candid, to waver when her word was engaged, and retract when he thought himſelf ſecure,—honour, juſtice, and ſhame, told her the time was now paſt.

"And yet is not this," cried ſhe, "placing nominal before actual evil? Is it not ſtudying appearance at the expence of reality? If agreeing to wrong is criminal, is not performing it worſe? If repentance for ill actions calls for mercy, has not repentance for ill intentions a yet higher claim?—And what reproaches from Delvile can be ſo bitter as my own?—

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over?—What separation, what sorrow, what possible calamity can hang upon my mind with such heaviness, as the sense of committing voluntary evil?"

This thought so much affected her, that, conquering all regret either for Delvile or herself, she resolved to write to him instantly, and acquaint him of the alteration in her sentiments.

This, however, after having so deeply engaged herself, was by no means easy; and many letters were begun, but not one of them was finished, when a sudden recollection obliged her to give over the attempt,—for she knew not whither to direct to him.

In the haste with which their plan had been formed and settled, it had never once occurred to them that any occasion for writing was likely to happen. Delvile, indeed, knew that her address would still be the same; and with regard to his own, as his journey to London was to be secret, he purposed not having any fixed habitation. On the day of their marriage, and not before, they had appointed to meet at the house of Mrs. Roberts, in Petterlane, whence they were instantly to proceed to the church.

She might still, indeed, enclose a letter for him to one to Mrs. Hill, to be delivered to him on the destined morning when he called to claim her, but to fail him at the last moment, when Mr. Belfield would have drawn

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up the bond, when a licence was procured, the clergyman waiting to perform the ceremony, and Delvile without a ſuſpicion but that the next moment would unite them for ever, ſeemed extending prudence into treachery, and power into tyranny. Delvile had done nothing to merit ſuch treatment, he had practiſed no deceit, he had been guilty of no perfidy, he had opened to her his whole heart, and after ſhewing it without any diſguiſe, the option had been all her own to accept or refuſe him.

A ray of joy now broke its way through the gloom of her apprehenſions. "Ah!" cried ſhe, "I have not, then, any means to recede! an unprovoked breach of promiſe, at the very moment deſtined for its performance, would but vary the mode of acting wrong, without approaching nearer to acting right!"

This idea for a while not merely calmed but delighted her; to be the wife of Delvile ſeemed now a matter of neceſſity, and ſhe ſoothed herſelf with believing that to ſtruggle againſt it were vain.

The next morning during breakfaſt Mr. Monckton arrived.

Not greater, though winged with joy, had been the expedition of Delvile to open to him his plan, than was his own, though only goaded by deſperation, to make ſome effort with Cecilia for rendering it abortive. Nor could all his ſelf-denial, the command which he

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he held over his paſſions, nor the rigour with which his feelings were made ſubſervient to his intereſt, in this ſudden hour of trial, avail to preſerve his equanimity. The refinements of hypocriſy, and the arts of inſinuation, offered advantages too diſtant, and exacted attentions too ſubtle, for a moment ſo alarming; thoſe arts and thoſe attentions he had already for many years practiſed, with an addreſs the moſt maſterly, and a diligence the moſt indefatigable: ſucceſs had of late ſeemed to follow his toils; the encreaſing infirmities of his wife, the diſappointment and retirement of Cecilia, uniting to promiſe him a concluſion equally ſpeedy and happy; when now, by a ſudden and unexpected ſtroke, the ſweet ſolace of his future cares, the long projected recompence of his paſt ſufferings, was to be ſnatched from him for-ever, and by one who, compared with himſelf, was but the acquaintance of a day.

Almoſt wholly off his guard, from the ſurpriſe and horror of this apprehenſion, he entered the room with ſuch an air of haſte and perturbation, that Mrs. Charlton and her grand-daughters demanded what was the matter.

"I am come," he anſwered abruptly, yet endeavouring to recollect himſelf, "to ſpeak with Miſs Beverley upon buſineſs of ſome importance."

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"My dear, then," said Mrs. Charlton, "you had better go with Mr. Monckton into your dreſſing-room."

Cecilia, deeply bluſhing, aroſe and led the way: ſlowly, however, ſhe proceeded, though urged by Mr. Monckton, to make ſpeed. Certain of his diſapprobation, and but doubtfully relieved from her own, ſhe dreaded a conference which on his ſide, ſhe foreſaw, would be all exhortation and reproof, and on hers all timidity and ſhame.

"Good God," cried he, "Miſs Beverley, what is this you have done? bound yourſelf to marry a man who deſpiſes, who ſcorns, who refuſes to own you!"

Shocked by this opening, ſhe ſtarted, but could make no anſwer.

"See you not," he continued, "the indignity which is offered you? Does the looſe, the flimſy veil with which it is covered, hide it from your underſtanding, or diſguiſe it from your delicacy?"

"I thought not,—I meant not," ſaid ſhe, more and more confounded, "to ſubmit to any indignity, though my pride, in an exigence ſo peculiar, may give way, for a while, to convenience."

"To convenience?" repeated he, "to contempt, to deriſion, to inſolence!"—

"Oh, Mr. Monckton!" interrupted Cecilia, "make not uſe of ſuch expreſſions! they are too cruel for me to hear, and if I thought they

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they were just, would make me miserable for life?"

"You are deceived, grosly deceived," replied he, "if you doubt their truth for a moment; they are not, indeed, even decently concealed from you; they are glaring as the day, and wilful blindness can alone obscure them."

"I am sorry, Sir," said Cecilia, whose confusion, at a charge so rough, began now to give way to anger, "if this is your opinion; and I am sorry, too, for the liberty I have taken in troubling you upon such a subject."

An apology so full of displeasure instantly taught Mr. Monckton the error he was committing, and checking, therefore, the violence of those emotions to which his sudden and desperate disappointment gave rise, and which betrayed him into reproaches so unskilful, he endeavoured to recover his accustomed equanimity, and assuming an air of friendly openness, said, "Let me not offend you, my dear Miss Beverley, by a freedom which resolts merely from a solicitude to serve you, and which the length and intimacy of our acquaintance had, I hoped, long since authorised. I know not how to see you on the brink of destruction without speaking, yet, if you are averse to my sincerity, I will curb it, and have done."

"No, do not have done," cried she, much softened; "your sincerity does me nothing

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but honour, and hitherto, I am sure, it has done me nothing but good. Perhaps I deserve your utmost censure; I feared it, indeed, before you came, and ought, therefore, to have better prepared myself for meeting with it."

This speech completed Mr. Monckton's self-victory; it shewed him not only the impropriety of his turbulence, but gave him room to hope that a mildness more crafty would have better success.

"You cannot but be certain," he answered, "that my zeal proceeds wholly from a desire to be of use to you: my knowledge of the world might possibly, I thought, assist your inexperience, and the disinterestedness of my regard, might enable me to see and to point out the dangers to which you are exposed, from artifice and duplicity in those who have other purposes to answer than what simply belong to your welfare."

"Neither artifice nor duplicity," cried Cecilia, jealous for the honour of Delvile, "have been practised against me. Argument, and not persuasion, determined me, and if I have done wrong—those who prompted me have erred as unwittingly as myself."

"You are too generous to perceive the difference, or you would find nothing less alike. If, however, my plainness will not offend you, before it is quite too late, I will point out to you a few of the evils,—for there are some

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ſome I cannot even mention, which at this inſtant do not merely threaten, but await you."

Ceſilia ſtarted at this terrifying offer, and afraid to accept, yet aſhamed to refuſe it, hung back irreſolute.

"I ſee," ſaid Mr. Monckton, after a pauſe of ſome continuance, "your determination admits no appeal. The conſequence muſt, indeed, be all your own, but I am greatly grieved to find how little you are aware of its ſerioufneſs. Hereafter you will wiſh, perhaps, that the friend of your earlieſt youth had been permitted to adviſe you; at preſent you only think him officious and impertinent, and therefore he can do nothing you will be ſo likely to approve as quitting you. I wiſh you, then, greater happineſs than ſeems prepared to follow you, and a counſellor more proſperous in offering his aſſiſtance."

He would then have taken his leave: but Cecilia called out, "Oh, Mr. Monckton! do you then give me up?"

"Not unleſs you wiſh it."

"Alas, I know not what to wiſh! except, indeed, the reſtoration of that ſecurity from ſelf-blame, which till yeſterday, even in the midſt of diſappointment, quieted and conſoled me."

"Are you, then, ſenſible you have gone wrong, yet reſolute not to turn back?"

"Could I tell, could I ſee," cried ſhe, with energy, "which way I *ought* to turn, not a moment

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a moment would I hesitate how to act! If my heart should have no power, my happiness no choice,—I would recover my own esteem by any sacrifice that could be made!"

"What, then, can possibly be your doubt? To be as you were yesterday what is wanting but your own inclination?"

"Every thing is wanting; right, honour, firmness, all by which the just are bound, and all which the conscientious hold sacred!"

"These scruples are merely romantic; your own good sense, had it fairer play, would contemn them; but it is warped at present by prejudice and prepossession."

"No, indeed!" cried she, colouring at the charge, "I may have entered too precipitately into an engagement I ought to have avoided, but it is weakness of judgment, not of heart, that disables me from retrieving my error."

"Yet you will neither hear whither it may lead you, nor which way you may escape from it?"

"Yes, Sir," cried she, trembling, "I am now ready to hear both."

"Briefly, then, I will tell you. It will lead you into a family of which every individual will disdain you; it will make you inmate of an house of which no other inmate will associate with you; you will be insulted as an inferior, and reproached as an intruder; your birth will be a subject of ridicule, and your whole race only named with derision: and

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and while the elders of the proud cattle treat you with open contempt, the man for whom you suffer will not dare to support you."

"Impossible! impossible!" cried Cecilia, with the most angry emotion, "this whole representation is exaggerated, and the latter part is utterly without foundation."

"The latter part," said Mr. Monckton, "is of all other least disputable: the man who now dares not own, will then never venture to defend you. On the contrary, to make peace for himself, he will be the first to neglect you. The ruined estates of his ancestors will be repaired by your fortune, while the name which you carry into his family will be constantly resented as an injury: you will thus be plundered though you are scorned, and told to consider yourself honoured that they condescend to make use of you! nor here rests the evil of a forced connection with so much arrogance,—even your children, should you have any, will be educated to despise you!

"Dreadful and horrible!" cried Cecilia; "I can hear no more.—Oh, Mr. Monckton, what a prospect have you opened to my view!"

"Fly from it, then, while it is yet in your power,—when two paths are before you, choose not that which leads to destruction; send instantly after Delvile and tell him that you have recovered your senses."

"I would

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"I would long ſince have ſent—I wanted not a repreſentation ſuch as this,—but I know not how to direct to him, nor whither he is gone."

"All art and baſeneſs to prevent your recantation!"

"No, Sir, no," cried ſhe with quickneſs; "whatever may be the truth of your painting in general, all that concerns——"

Aſhamed of the vindication ſhe intended, which yet in her own mind was firm and animated, ſhe ſtopt and left the ſentence unfiniſhed.

"In what place were you to meet?" ſaid Mr. Monckton; "you can at leaſt ſend to him there."

"We were only to have met," anſwered ſhe, in much confuſion, "at the laſt moment, and that would be too late—it would be too—I could not, without ſome previous notice, break a promiſe which I gave without any reſtriction."

"Is this your only objection?"

"It is; but it is one which I cannot conquer."

"Then you would give up this ill-boding connection, but from notions of delicacy with regard to the time?"

"Indeed I meant it, before you came. You, then, will obviate this objection: give me but the commiſſion, either verbally or in writing,

writing, and I will undertake to find him out, and deliver it before night."

Cecilia, little expecting this offer, turned extremely pale, and after pausing some moments, said, in a faultering voice, "What, then, Sir, is your advice, in what manner—"

"I will say to him all that is necessary; trust the matter with me."

"No,—he deserves, at least, an apology from myself—though how to make it—"

She stopt, she hesitated, she went out of the room for pen and ink, she returned without them, and the agitation of her mind every instant encreasing; she begged him, in a faint voice, to excuse her while she consulted with Mrs. Charlton, and promising to wait upon him again, was hurrying away.

Mr. Monckton, however, saw too great danger in so much emotion to trust her out of his sight: he told her, therefore, that she would only encrease her perplexity, without reaping any advantage, by an application to Mrs. Charlton; that if she was really sincere in wishing to recede, there was not a moment to be lost, and Delvile should immediately be pursued.

Cecilia, sensible of the truth of this speech, and once more recollecting the unaffected earnestness with which, but an hour or two before, she had herself desired to renounce this engagement, now summoned her utmost courage to her aid, and, after a short, but painful

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painful ſtruggle, determined
ly with her profeſſions and h
by one great and final effor
her doubts, and try to ſilenc
by completing the triumph
inclination.

She called, therefore, for
without venturing herſelf
wrote the following letter.

To Mortimer Del

Accuſe me not of caprice
irreſolution, when you fin
with terror from the prom
and no longer either able o
form it. The reproaches
ſhould very ill endure; but
of my own heart for an acti
approve nor defend, woul
oppreſſive. With ſuch a
mind, length of life would
with a ſenſation of guilt ea
be terrific! Theſe being my
engagement into which we h
cannot wonder, and you ha
ſon to repine, that I dare not
where would be your chan
with one who in the very a
yours would forfeit her own!

I bluſh at this tardy rec
grieve at the diſappointment

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you: for I have visited in the ex-
ation of an inward vexation, who is
to be neglected with impunity. Con-
ain yourself; and I shall need no other
ne.

ieu, and may all felicity attend you!
dear of the almost total privation of
, will mitigate the bitterness with
you will probably read this letter;
be mitigated but too easily! Yet my
ot to a clandestine union shall never be
ed; and though I confess to you I am
appy, I solemnly declare my inclination
alterable. A little reflection will tell
am right, though a great deal of lasting
ference suffice to make you pardon my
right no sooner.

C. B.

is letter, which with trembling haste,
ing from a fear of her own irresolute
olded and fenced, Mr. Monckton, from
me apprehension, yet more eagerly re-
d scarce waiting to bid her good
ing, mounted his horse, and pursued his
London.

ia returned to Mr. Charlton to re-
her with what had passed: and re-
ming the sorrow she felt in opposing
the man whom, in the whole world,
wished to oblige, she yet found a

painful struggle, determined to act consistently with her professions and her character, and, by one great and final effort, to conclude all her doubts, and try to silence even her regret, by completing the triumph of fortitude over inclination.

She called, therefore, for pen and ink, and without venturing herself from the room, wrote the following letter.

To Mortimer Delvile, Esq.

Accuse me not of caprice, and pardon my irresolution, when you find me shrinking with terror from the promise I have made, and no longer either able or willing to perform it. The reproaches of your family I should very ill endure; but the reproaches of my own heart for an action I can neither approve nor defend, would be still more oppressive. With such a weight upon the mind, length of life would be burthensome, with a sensation of guilt early death would be terrific! These being my notions of the engagement into which we have entered, you cannot wonder, and you have still less reason to repine, that I dare not fulfil it. Alas! where would be your chance of happiness with one who in the very act of becoming yours would forfeit her own!

I blush at this tardy recantation, and I grieve at the disappointment it may occasion

ſion you: but I have yielded to the exhortations of an inward monitor, who is never to be neglected with impunity. Conſult him yourſelf; and I ſhall need no other advocate.

Adieu, and may all felicity attend you! If to hear of the almoſt total privation of mine, will mitigate the reſentment with which you will probably read this letter, it may be mitigated but too eaſily! Yet my conſent to a clandeſtine action ſhall never be repeated; and though I confeſs to you I am not happy, I ſolemnly declare my reſolution is unalterable. A little reflection will tell you I am right, though a great deal of lenity may ſcarce ſuffice to make you pardon my being right no ſooner.

C. B.

This letter, which with trembling haſte, reſulting from a fear of her own ſteadineſs, ſhe folded and ſealed, Mr. Monckton, from the ſame apprehenſion, yet more eagerly received; and ſcarce waiting to bid her good morning, mounted his horſe, and purſued his way to London.

Cecilia returned to Mrs. Charlton to acquaint her with what had paſſed: and notwithſtanding the ſorrow ſhe felt in apparently injuring the man whom, in the whole world, ſhe moſt wiſhed to oblige, ſhe yet found a ſatisfaction in the ſacrifice ſhe had made, that

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workmen having disappointed her in finishing her own.

But, in defiance of her utmost exertion, towards the evening of this day the uneasiness of her uncertainty grew almost intolerable. The next morning she had promised Delvile to set out for London, and he expected the morning after to claim her for his wife; yet Mr. Monckton neither sent nor came, and she knew not if her letter was delivered, or if still he was unprepared for the disappointment by which he was awaited. A secret regret for the unhappiness she must occasion him, which silently yet powerfully reproached her, stole fast upon her mind, and poisoned its tranquillity; for though her opinion was invariable in holding his proposal to be wrong, she thought too highly of his character to believe he would have made it but from a mistaken notion it was right. She painted him, therefore, to herself, as glowing with indignation, accusing her of inconsistency, and perhaps suspecting her of coquetry, and imputing her change of conduct to motives the most trifling and narrow, till with resentment and disdain, he drove her wholly from his thoughts.

In a few minutes, however, the picture was reversed; Delvile no more appeared storming nor unreasonable; his face wore an aspect of sorrow, and his brow was clouded with disappointment: he forbore to reproach her,

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ber, but the look which her imagination delineated was more piercing than words of severest import.

These images pursued and tormented her, drew tears from her eyes, and loaded her heart with anguish. Yet, when she recollected that her conduct had had in view an higher motive than pleasing Delvile, she felt that it ought to offer her an higher satisfaction: she tried, therefore, to revive her spirits, by reflecting upon her integrity, and refused all indulgence to this enervating sadness, beyond what the weakness of human nature demands, as some relief to its sufferings upon every fresh attack of misery.

A conduct such as this was the best antidote against affliction, whose arrows are never with so little difficulty repelled, as when they light upon a conscience which no self-reproach has laid bare to their malignancy.

Before six o'clock the next morning, her maid came to her bedside with the following letter, which she told her had been brought by an express.

To Miss Beverley.

May this letter, with one only from Delvile-Castle, be the last that *Miss Beverley* may ever receive.

Yet sweet to me as is that hope, I write in the utmost uneasiness; I have just heard that

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that a gentleman, whom, by the deſcription that is given of him, I imagine is Mr. Monckton, has been in ſearch of me with a letter which he was anxious to deliver immediately.

Perhaps this letter is from Miſs Beverley, perhaps it contains directions which ought inſtantly to be followed: could I divine what they are, with what eagerneſs would I ſtudy to anticipate their execution! It will not, I hope, be too late to receive them on Saturday, when her power over my actions will be confirmed, and when every wiſh ſhe will communicate, ſhall be gratefully, joyfully, and with delight fulfilled.

I have ſought Belfield in vain; he has left Lord Vannelt, and no one knows whither he is gone. I have been obliged, therefore, to truſt a ſtranger to draw up the bond; but he is a man of good character, and the time of ſecreſy will be too ſhort to put his diſcretion in much danger. To-morrow, Friday, I ſhall ſpend ſolely in endeavouring to diſcover Mr. Monckton; I have leiſure ſufficient for the ſearch, ſince ſo proſperous has been my diligence, that *every thing is prepared!*

I have ſeen ſome lodgings in Pall-Mall, which I think are commodious and will ſuit you: ſend a ſervant, therefore, before you to ſecure them. If upon your arrival I ſhould venture to meet you there, be not, I beſeech you, offended or alarmed; I ſhall take every poſſible

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poſſible precaution neither to be known nor ſeen, and I will ſtay with you only three minutes. The meſſenger who carries this is ignorant from whom it comes, for I fear his repeating my name among your ſervants, and he could ſcarce return to me with an anſwer before you will yourſelf be in town. Yes, lovelieſt Cecilia! at the very moment you receive this letter, the chaiſe will, I flatter myſelf, be at the door, which is to bring to me a treaſure that will enrich every future hour of my life! And oh, as to me it will be exhauſtleſs, may but its ſweet diſpenſer experience ſome ſhare of the happineſs ſhe beſtows, and then what, ſave her own purity, will be ſo perfect, ſo unſullied, as the felicity of her

M. D?

The perturbation of Cecilia upon reading this letter was unſpeakable: Mr. Monckton, ſhe found, had been wholly unſucceſsful, all her heroiſm had anſwered no purpoſe, and the tranſaction was as backward as before ſhe had exerted it.

She was now, therefore, called upon to think and act entirely for herſelf. Her opinion was ſtill the ſame, nor did her reſolution waver, yet how to put it in execution ſhe could not diſcern.

To write to him was impoſſible, ſince ſhe was ignorant where he was to be found; to diſappoint

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disappoint him at the last moment she could not resolve, since such a conduct appeared to her unfeeling and unjustifiable: for a few instants she thought of having him waited for at night in London, with a letter; but the danger of entrusting any one with such a commission, and the uncertainty of finding him, should he disguise himself, made the success of this scheme too precarious for trial.

One expedient alone occurred to her, which, though she felt to be hazardous, she believed was without an alternative: this was no other than hastening to London herself, consenting to the interview he had proposed in Pall-Mall, and then, by strongly stating her objections, and confessing the grief they occasioned her, to pique at once his generosity and his pride upon releasing her himself from the engagement into which he had entered.

She had no time to deliberate; her plan, therefore, was decided almost as soon as formed, and every moment being precious, she was obliged to awaken Mrs. Charlton, and communicate to her at once the letter from Delvile, and the new resolution she had taken.

Mrs. Charlton, having no object in view but the happiness of her young friend, with a facility that looked not for objections, and scarce saw them when presented, agreed to the expedition, and kindly consented to accompany her to London; for Cecilia, however concerned to hurry and fatigue her, was too

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anxious for the ſanction of her preſence to ſolicitate in ſoliciting it.

A chaiſe, therefore, was ordered; and with poſt-horſes for ſpeed, and two ſervants on horſeback, the moment Mrs. Charlton was ready, they ſet out on their journey.

Scarce had they proceeded two miles on their way, when they were met by Mr. Monckton, who was haſtening to their houſe.

Amazed and alarmed at a ſight ſo unexpected, he ſtopt the chaiſe to enquire whither they were going.

Cecilia, without anſwering, aſked if her letter had yet been received?

"I could not," ſaid Mr. Monckton, "deliver it to a man who was not to be found: I was this moment coming to acquaint you how vainly I had ſought him; but ſtill that your journey is unneceſſary, unleſs voluntary, ſince I have left it at the houſe where you told me you ſhould meet to-morrow morning, and where he muſt then unavoidably receive it."

"Indeed, Sir," cried Cecilia, "to-morrow morning will be too late,—in conſcience, in juſtice, and even in decency too late! I *muſt*, therefore, go to town; yet I go not, believe me, in oppoſition to your injunctions, but to enable myſelf, without treachery or diſhonour, to fulfil them."

Mr. Monckton, aghaſt and confounded, made not any anſwer, till Cecilia gave orders to the poſtilion to drive on: he then haſtily

called

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called to stop him, and began the warmest expostulation; but Cecilia, firm when she believed herself right, though wavering when fearful she was wrong, told him it was now too late to change her plan, and repeating her orders to the postilion, left him to his own reflections; grieved herself to reject his counsel, yet too intently occupied by her own affairs and designs, to think long of any other.

CHAP. V.

A TORMENT.

AT ——— they stopt for dinner; Mrs. Charlton being too much fatigued to go on without some rest, though the haste of Cecilia to meet Delvile time enough for new arranging their affairs, made her regret every moment that was spent upon the road.

Their meal was not long, and they were returning to their chaise, when they were suddenly encountered by Mr. Morrice, who was just alighted from his horse.

He congratulated himself upon the happiness of meeting them with the air of a man who nothing doubted that happiness being mutual; then hastening to speak of the Grove,

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"I could hardly," he cried, "get away; my friend Monckton won't know what to do without me, for Lady Margaret, poor old soul, is in a shocking bad way indeed; there's hardly any staying in the room with her; her breathing is just like the grunting of a hog. She can't possibly last long, for she's quite upon her last legs, and tumbles about so when she walks alone, one would swear she was drunk."

"If you take infirmity," said Mrs. Charlton, who was now helped into the chaise, "for intoxication, you must suppose no old person sober."

"Vastly well said, ma'am," cried he; "I really forgot your being an old lady yourself, or I should not have made the observation. However, as to poor Lady Margaret, she may do as well as ever by and by, for she has an excellent constitution, and I suppose she has been hardly any better than she is now these forty years, for I remember when I was quite a boy hearing her called a limping old puddle."

"Well, we'll discuss this matter, if you please," said Cecilia, "some other time," and ordered the postilion to drive on. But before they came to their next stage, Morrice having changed his horse, joined them, and rode on by their side, begging them to observe what haste he had made on purpose to have the pleasure of escorting them.

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This forwardness was very offensive to Mrs. Charlton, whose years and character had long procured her more deference and respect: but Cecilia, anxious only to hasten her journey, was indifferent to every thing, save what retarded it.

At the same inn they both again changed horses, and he still continued riding with them, and occasionally talking, till they were within twenty miles of London, when a disturbance upon the road exciting his curiosity, he hastily rode away from them to enquire into its cause.

Upon coming up to the place whence it proceeded, they saw a party of gentlemen on horseback surrounding a chaise which had been just overturned; and while the confusion in the road obliged the postilion to stop, Cecilia heard a lady's voice exclaiming, "I declare I dare say I am killed!" and instantly recollecting Miss Larolles, the fear of discovery and delay made her desire the man to drive on with all speed. He was preparing to obey her, but Morrice, galloping after them, called out, "Miss Beverley, one of the ladies that has been overturned, is an acquaintance of yours. I used to see her with you at Mrs. Harrel's."

"Did you?" said Cecilia, much disconcerted, "I hope she is not hurt?"

"No, not at all; but the lady with her is bruised to death; won't you come and see her?"

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"I am too much in haſte at preſent,—and I can do them no good; but Mrs. Charlton I am ſure will ſpare her ſervant, if he can be of any uſe."

"O, but the young lady wants to ſpeak to you; ſhe is coming up to the chaiſe as faſt as ever ſhe can,"

"And how ſhould ſhe know me?" cried Cecilia, with much ſurpriſe; "I am ſure ſhe could not ſee me."

"O I told her," anſwered Morrice, with a nod of ſelf-approbation for what he had done, "I told her it was you, for I knew I could ſoon overtake you."

Diſpleaſure at this officiouſneſs was unavailing, for looking out of the window, ſhe perceived Miſs Larolles, followed by half her party, not three paces from the chaiſe.

"O my dear creature," ſhe called out, "what a terrible accident! I aſſure you I am ſo monſtrouſly frightened you've no idea. It's the luckieſt thing in the world that you were going this way. Never any thing happened ſo exceſſively provoking; you've no notion what a fall we've had. It's horrid ſhocking, I aſſure you. How have you been all this time? You can't conceive how glad I am to ſee you."

"And to which will Miſs Beverley anſwer firſt," cried a voice which announced Mr. Goſport, "the joy or the ſorrow? For ſo adroitly are they blended, that a common auditor

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ditor could, with difficulty decide whether condolence or congratulation should have the precedency."

"How can you be so excessive horrid," cried Miss Larolles, "to talk of congratulation, when one's in such a shocking panic, that one does not know if one's dead or alive!"

"Dead, then, for any wager," returned he, "if we may judge from your stillness."

"I desire, now, you won't begin joking," cried she, "for I assure you its an excessive serious affair. I was never so rejoiced in my life as when I found I was not killed. I've been so squeezed you've no notion. I thought for a full hour I had broke both my arms."

"And my heart at the same time," said Mr. Gosport; "I hope you did not imagine that the least fragile of the three?"

"All our hearts, give me leave to add," said Captain Aresby—just then advancing, "all our hearts must have been *abimés*, by the indisposition of Miss Larolles, had not their doom been fortunately revoked by the sight of Miss Beverley."

"Well, this is excessive odd," cried Miss Larolles, "that every body should run away so from poor Mrs. Mears; she'll be so affronted you've no idea. I thought, Captain Aresby, you would have stayed to take care of her."

"I'll run and see how she is myself," cried Morrice, and away he galloped.

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"Really, ma'am," said the Captain, "I am quite *au deſeſpoir* to have failed in any of my devoirs; but I make it a principle to be a mere looker-on upon theſe occaſions, leſt I ſhould be ſo unhappy as to commit any *faux pas* by too much *empreſſement*."

"An admirable caution!" ſaid Mr. Goſport, "and, to ſo ardent a temper, a neceſſary check!"

Cecilia, whom the ſurpriſe and vexation of ſo unſeaſonable a meeting, when ſhe particularly wiſhed to have eſcaped all notice, had hitherto kept in painful ſilence, began now to recover ſome preſence of mind; and making her compliments to Miſs Larolles and Mr. Goſport, with a ſlight bow to the Captain, ſhe apologized for hurrying away, but told them ſhe had an engagement in London which could not be deferred, and was then giving orders to the poſtilion to drive on, when Morrice returning full ſpeed, called out, "The poor lady's ſo bad ſhe is not able to ſtir a ſtep; ſhe can't put a foot to the ground, and ſhe ſays ſhe's quite black and blue; ſo I told her I was ſure Miſs Beverley would not refuſe to make room for her in her chaiſe, till the other can be put to rights; and ſhe ſays ſhe ſhall take it as a great favour. Here, poſtilion, a little more to the right! come, ladies and gentlemen, get out of the way."

This impertinence, however extraordinary, Cecilia could not oppoſe; for Mrs. Charlton, ever

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ever compassionate and complying where there was any appearance of distress, instantly seconded the proposal: the chaise, therefore, was turned back, and she was obliged to offer a place in it to Mrs. Mears, who, though more frightened than hurt, readily accepted it, notwithstanding, to make way for her without incommoding Mrs. Charlton, she was forced to get out herself.

She failed not, however, to desire that all possible expedition might be used in refitting the other chaise for their reception; and all the gentlemen but one dismounted their horses, in order to assist, or seem to assist in getting it ready.

The only unconcerned spectator in the midst of the apparent general bustle, was Mr. Meadows; who viewed all that passed without troubling himself to interfere, and with an air of the most evident carelessness whether matters went well or went ill.

Miss Larolles, now returning to the scene of action, suddenly screamed out, "O dear, where's my little dog! I never thought of him, I declare! I love him better than any thing in the world. I would not have him hurt for an hundred thousand pounds. Lord, where is he?"

"Crushed or suffocated in the overturn, no doubt," said Mr. Gosport; "but as you must have been his executioner, what foster death could

could he die? If you will yourself inflict the punishment, I will submit to the same fate."

"Lord, how you love to plague one!" cried she: and then enquired among the servants what was become of her dog. The poor little animal, forgotten by its mistress, and disregarded by all others, was now discovered by its yelping; and soon found to have been the most material sufferer by the overturn, one of its fore legs being broken.

Could screams or lamentations, reproaches to the servants, or complaints against the destinies, have abated his pain, or made a callus of the fracture, but short would have been the duration of his misery; for neither words were saved, nor lungs were spared; the very air was rent with cries, and all present were upbraided as if accomplices in the disaster.

The postilion, at length, interrupted this vociferation with news that the chaise was again fit for use; and Cecilia, eager to be gone, finding him little regarded, repeated what he said to Miss Larolles.

"The chaise?" cried she, "why you don't suppose I'll ever get into that horrid chaise any more? I do assure you I would not upon any account."

"Not get into it?" said Cecilia, "for what purpose, then, have we all waited till it was ready?"

"O, I declare I would not go in it for forty thousand worlds. I would rather walk

to

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to an inn, if its a hundred and fifty miles off."

"But as it happens," ſaid Mr. Goſport, "to be only ſeven miles, I fancy you will condeſcend to ride."

"Seven miles! Lord how ſhocking! you frighten me ſo you have no idea. Poor Mrs. Mears! She'll have to go quite alone. I dare ſay the chaiſe will be down fifty times by the way. Ten to one but ſhe breaks her neck! only conceive how horrid! I aſſure you I am exceſſive glad I am out of it."

"Very friendly, indeed!" ſaid Mr. Goſport. "Mrs. Mears, then, may break her bones at her leiſure!"

Mrs. Mears, however, when applied to, profeſſed an equal averſion to the carriage in which ſhe had been ſo unfortunate, and declared ſhe would rather walk than return to it, though one of her ancles was already ſo ſwelled that ſhe could hardly ſtand.

"Why then the beſt way, ladies," cried Morrice, with the look of a man happy in vanquiſhing all difficulties, "will be for Mrs. Charlton, and that poor lady with the bruiſes, to go together in that ſound chaiſe, and then for us gentlemen to eſcort this young lady and Miſs Beverley on foot, till we all come to the next inn. Miſs Beverley, I know, is an excellent walker, for I have heard Mr. Monckton ſay ſo."

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Cecilia, though in the utmost consternation at a proposal which must so long retard a journey she had so many reasons to wish hastened, knew not how either in decency or humanity to oppose it: and the fear of raising suspicion, from a consciousness how much there was to suspect, forced her to curb her impatience, and reduced her even to repeat the offer which Morrice had made, though she could scarce look at him for anger at his unseasonable forwardness.

No voice dissenting, the troop began to be formed. The foot consisted of the two young ladies and Mr. Gosport, who alighted to walk with Cecilia; the cavalry, of Mr. Meadows, the Captain, and Morrice, who walked their horses a foot pace, while the rest of the party rode on with the chaise, as attendants upon Mrs. Mears.

Just before they set off, Mr. Meadows, riding negligently up to the carriage, exerted himself so far as to say to Mrs. Mears, "Are you hurt, ma'am?" and, at the same instant, seeming to recollect Cecilia, he turned about, and yawning while he touched his hat, said, "O, how d'ye do, ma'am?" and then, without waiting an answer to either of his questions, flapped it over his eyes, and joined the cavalcade, though without appearing to have any consciousness that he belonged to it.

Cecilia would most gladly have used the rejected chaise herself, but could not make such a proposal

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no proposal to Mrs. Charlton, who was past the age and the courage for even any appearance of enterprize. Upon enquiry, however, she had the satisfaction to hear that the distance to the next stage was but two miles, though multiplied to seven by the malice of Mr. Gosport.

Miss Larolles carried her little dog in her arms, declaring she would never more trust him a moment away from her. She acquainted Cecilia that she had been for some time upon a visit to Mrs. Mears, who, with the rest of the party, had taken her to see a house and gardens, where they had made an early dinner, from which they were just returning home when the chaise broke down.

She then proceeded, with her usual volubility, to relate the little nothings that had passed since the winter, flying from subject to subject, with no meaning but to be heard, and no wish but to talk, ever rapid in speech, though minute in detail. This loquacity met not with any interruption, save now and then a sarcastic remark from Mr. Gosport; for Cecilia was too much occupied by her own affairs to answer or listen to such uninteresting discourse.

Her silence, however, was at length forcibly broken; Mr. Gosport, taking advantage of the first moment Miss Larolles stopt for breath, said, "Pray what carries you to town,

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town, Miss Beverley, at this time of the year?"

Cecilia, whose thoughts had been wholly employed upon what would pass at her approaching meeting with Delvile, was so entirely unprepared for this question, that she could make to it no manner of answer, till Mr. Gosport, in a tone of some surprise, repeated it, and then, not without hesitation, "I have some business, Sir, in London, — pray how long have you been in the country?"

"Business, have you?" cried he, struck by her evasion; "and pray what can you and business have in common?"

"More than you may imagine," answered she, with greater steadiness; "and perhaps before long I may even have enough to teach me the enjoyment of leisure."

"Why you don't pretend to play my Lady Notable, and become your own steward?"

"And what can I do better?"

"What? Why seek one ready made to take the trouble off your hands. There are such creatures to be found, I promise you: beasts of burthen, who will freely undertake the management of your estate, for no other reward than the trifling one of possessing it. Can you no where meet with such an animal?"

"I don't

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"I don't know," answered she, laughing, "I have not been looking out."

"And have none such made application to you!"

"Why no,—I believe not."

"Fie, fie! no register-office keeper has been pestered with more claimants. You know they assault you by dozens."

"You must pardon me, indeed, I know not any such thing."

"You know, then, why they do not, and that is much the same."

"I may conjecture why, at least: the place, I suppose, is not worth the service."

"No, no; the place, they conclude, is already seized, and the fee-simple of the estate is the heart of the owner. Is it not so?"

"The heart of the owner," answered she, a little confused, "may, indeed, be simple, but not, perhaps, so easily seized as you imagine."

"Have you, then, wisely saved it from a storm, by a generous surrender? you have been, indeed, in an excellent school for the study both of attack and defence; Delvile-Castle, is a fortress which, even in ruins, proves its strength by its antiquity: and it teaches, also, an admirable lesson, by displaying the dangerous, the infallible power of time, which defies all might, and undermines all strength; which breaks down every barrier, and shews nothing endurable but itself."

Then

Then looking at her with an arch earneſtneſs, "I think," he added, "you made a long viſit there; did this obſervation never occur to you? did you never perceive, never *feel*, rather, the inſidious properties of time?"

"Yes, certainly," anſwered ſhe, alarmed at the very mention of Delvile-Caſtle, yet affecting to underſtand literally what was ſaid metaphorically, "the havock of time upon the place could not fail ſtriking me."

"And was its havock," ſaid he, yet more archly, "merely external? is all within ſafe, ſound, and firm? and did the length of your reſidence ſhew its power by no new miſchief?"

"Doubtleſs, not," anſwered ſhe, with the ſame pretended ignorance; "the place is not in ſo deſperate a condition as to exhibit any viſible marks of decay in the courſe of three or four months."

"And, do you not know," cried he, "that the place to which I allude may receive a miſchief in as many minutes which double the number of years cannot rectify? The internal parts of a building are not leſs vulnerable to accident than its outſide; and though the evil may more eaſily be concealed, it will with greater difficulty be remedied. Many a fair ſtructure have I ſeen, which, like that now before me," (looking with much ſignificance at Cecilia,) "has to the eye ſeemed perfect in all its parts, and unhurt either by time or caſualty,

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ſualty, while within, ſome lurking evil, ſome latent injury, has ſecretly worked its way into the very *heart* of the edifice, where it has conſumed its ſtrength, and laid waſte its powers, till, ſinking deeper and deeper, it has ſapped its very foundation, before the ſuperſtructure has exhibited any token of danger. Is ſuch an accident among the things you hold to be poſſible?"

"Your language," ſaid ſhe, colouring very high, "is ſo florid, that I muſt own it renders your meaning rather obſcure."

"Shall I illuſtrate it by an example? Suppoſe, during your abode in Delvile-Caſtle,—"

"No, no," interrupted ſhe, with involuntary quickneſs, "why ſhould I trouble you to make illuſtrations?"

"O pray, my dear creature," cried Miſs Larolles, "how is Mrs. Harrel? I was never ſo ſorry for any body in my life. I quite forgot to aſk after her."

"Ay, poor Harrel!" cried Morrice, "he was a great loſs to his friends. I had juſt begun to have a regard for him: we were growing extremely intimate. Poor fellow! he really gave moſt excellent dinners."

"Harrel?" ſuddenly exclaimed Mr. Meadows, who ſeemed juſt then to firſt hear what was going forward, "who was he?"

"O, as good-natured a fellow as ever I knew in my life," anſwered Morrice; "he was never out of humour: he was drinking and

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and singing and dancing to the very last moment. Don't you remember him, Sir, that night at Vauxhall?"

Mr. Meadows made not any answer, but rode languidly on.

Morrice, ever more flippant than sagacious, called out, "I really believe the gentleman's deaf! he won't so much as say *humph, hay*, now; but I'll give him such a hallow in his ears, as shall make him hear me whether he will or no. Sir! I say!" bawling aloud, "have you forgot that night at Vauxhall?"

Mr. Meadows, starting at being thus shouted at, looked towards Morrice with some surprise, and said, "Were you so obliging, Sir, as to speak to me?"

"Lord, yes, Sir," said Morrice, amazed, "I thought you had asked something about Mr. Harrel, so I just made an answer to it—that's all."

"Sir, you are very good," returned he, slightly bowing and then looking another way, as if thoroughly satisfied with what had passed.

"But I say, Sir," resumed Morrice, don't you remember how Mr. Harrel—"

"Mr. who, Sir?"

"Mr. Harrel, Sir; was not you just now asking me who he was?"

"O, ay, true," cried Meadows, in a tone of extreme weariness, "I am much obliged to you. Pray give my respects to him."

And,

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And, touching his hat, he was riding away; but the astonished Morrice called out, "Your respects to him? why lord! Sir, don't you know he's dead?"

"Dead—who, Sir?"

"Why Mr. Harrel, Sir."

"Harrel?—O, very true," cried Meadows, with a face of sudden recollection; "he shot himself, I think; or was knocked down, or something of that sort: I remember it perfectly."

"O pray," cried Miss Larolles, "don't let's talk about it, it's the cruellest thing I ever knew in my life. I assure you I was so shocked, I thought I should never have got the better of it. I remember the next night at Ranelagh I could talk of nothing else. I dare say I told it to five hundred people, I assure you I was tired to death; only conceive how distressing!"

"An excellent method," cried Mr. Gosport, "to drive it out of your own head, by driving it into the heads of your neighbours! But were you not afraid, by such an ebullition of pathos, to burst as many hearts as you had auditors?"

"O, I assure you," cried she, "every body was so excessive shocked you've no notion; one heard of nothing else; all the world was raving mad about it."

"Really yes," cried the captain; "the subject was *obvious* upon our *parlous*. There was

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answer, she said, with what unconcern she could assume, "They were very much mistaken; Mr. Delvile had no such view."

"Indeed?" cried Mr. Gosport, again perceiving her change of countenance;" and is it possible you have actually escaped a siege, while every body concluded you taken by assault? pray where is young Delvile at present?"

"I don't—I can't tell, Sir."

"Is it long since you have seen him?"

"It is two months," answered she, with yet more hesitation, "since I was at Delvile-Castle."

"O, but," cried Morrice, "did not you see him while he was in Suffolk? I believe, indeed, he is there now, for it was only yesterday I heard of his coming down, by a gentleman who called upon Lady Margaret, and told us he had seen a stranger, a day or two ago, at Mrs. Charlton's door, and when he asked who he was, they told him his name was Delvile, and said he was on a visit at Mr. Biddulph's."

Cecilia was quite confounded by this speech; to have it known that Delvile had visited her, was in itself alarming; but to have her own equivocation thus glaringly exposed, was infinitely more dangerous. The just suspicions to which it must give rise filled her with dread, and the palpable evasion in which she had been discovered, overwhelmed her with confusion.

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"I think I have seen that man before, have you, Miss Beverley?" "Me—no," answered she, "I believe not,—I hardly, indeed, see him now."

"I have, I am pretty sure," said Morrice; "and if I could see his face, I dare say I should recollect him."

"He seems very willing to know if he can recollect any of *us*," said Mr. Gosport, "and, if I am not mistaken, he sees much better than he is seen."

He was now come up to them, and though a glance sufficed to discover the object of his search, the sight of the party with which she was surrounded made him not dare stop or speak to her, and therefore, clapping spurs to his horse, he galloped past them.

"See," cried Morrice, looking after him, "how he turns round to examine us! I wonder who he is!"

"Perhaps some highwayman!" cried Miss Larolles; "I assure you I am in a prodigious fright; I should hate to be robbed so you can't think."

"I was going to make much the same conjecture," said Mr. Gosport, "and, if I am not greatly deceived, that man is a robber of no common sort. What think you, Miss Beverley, can you discern a thief in disguise?"

"No, indeed; I pretend to no such extraordinary knowledge."

"That's

"That's true, for all that you pretend is extraordinary ignorance."

"I have a good mind," said Morrice, "to ride after him, and see what he is about."

"What for?" exclaimed Cecilia, greatly alarmed; "there can certainly be no occasion!"

"No, pray don't," cried Miss Larolles, "for I assure you if he should come back to rob us, I should die upon the spot. Nothing could be so disagreeable; I should scream so, you've no idea."

Morrice then gave up the proposal, and they walked quietly on; but Cecilia was extremely disturbed by this accident; she readily conjectured that, impatient for her arrival, Delvile had ridden that way, to see what had retarded her, and she was sensible that nothing could be so desirable as an immediate explanation of the motive of her journey. Such a meeting, therefore, had she been alone, was just what she could have wished, though, thus unluckily encompassed, it only added to her anxiety.

Involuntarily, however, she quickened her pace, through her eagerness to be relieved from so troublesome a party: but Miss Larolles, who was in no such haste, protested she could not keep up with her; saying, "You don't consider that I have got this sweet little dog to carry, and he is such a shocking plague to

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to me you've no notion. Only conceive what a weight he is!

"Pray, ma'am, cried Morrice, "let me take him for you; I'll be very careful of him, I promise you; and you need not be afraid to trust me, for I understand more about dogs than about any thing."

Miss Larolles, after many fond caresses, being really weary, consented, and Morrice placed the little animal before him on horseback: but while this matter was adjusting, and Miss Larolles was giving directions how she would have it held, Morrice exclaimed, "Look, look! that man is coming back! He is certainly watching us. There! now he's going off again!—I suppose he saw me remarking him."

"I dare say he's laying in wait to rob us," said Miss Larolles; "so when we turn off the high road, to go to Mrs. Mears, I suppose he'll come galloping after us. It's excessive horrid, I assure you."

"'Tis a petrifying thing," said the captain, "that one must always be *degouté* by some wretched being or other of this sort; but pray be not deranged, I will ride after him, if you please, and do *mon possible* to get rid of him."

"Indeed I wish you would," answered Miss Larolles, "for I assure you he has put such shocking notions into my head, it's quite disagreeable."

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"I shall make it a principle," said the captain, "to have the honour of obeying you." And was riding off, when Cecilia, in great agitation, called out, "Why should you go, Sir?—he is not in our way, pray let him alone—for what purpose should you pursue him?"

"I hope," said Mr. Gosport, "for the purpose of making him join our company, to some part of which I fancy he would be no very intolerable addition."

This speech again silenced Cecilia, who perceived, with the utmost confusion, that both Delvile and herself were undoubtedly suspected by Mr. Gosport, if not already actually betrayed to him. She was obliged, therefore, to let the matter take its course, though quite sick with apprehension lest a full discovery should follow the projected pursuit.

The Captain, who wanted not courage, however deeply in vanity and affectation he had buried common sense, stood suspended, upon the request of Cecilia that he would not go, and, with a shrug of distress, said, "Give me leave to own I am *parfaitment* in a state the most *accablant* in the world: nothing could give me greater pleasure than to profit of the occasion to accommodate either of these ladies; but as they proceed upon different principles, I am *indecidé* to a degree which way to turn myself!"

"Put

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"Put it to the vote, then," said Morrice; "the two ladies have both spoke; now, then, for the gentlemen. Come, Sir," to Mr. Gosport, "what say you?"

"O, fetch the culprit back, by all means," answered he; "and then let us all insist upon his opening his cause, by telling us in what he has offended us; for there is no part of his business, I believe, with which we are less acquainted."

"Well," said Morrice, "I'm for asking him a few questions too; so is the Captain; so every body has spoke but you, Sir," addressing himself to Mr. Meadows; "So now, Sir, let's hear your opinion."

Mr. Meadows, appearing wholly inattentive, rode on. "Why, Sir! I say!" cried Morrice, louder, "we are all waiting for your vote. Pray what is the gentleman's name? it's duced hard to make him hear one."

"His name is Meadows," said Miss Larolles, in a low voice, "and I assure you sometimes he won't hear people by the hour together. He's so excessive absent you've no notion. One day he made me so mad, that I could not help crying; and Mr. Sawyer was standing by the whole time! and I assure you I believe he laughed at me. Only conceive how distressing!"

"May be," said Morrice, "it's out of bashfulness: perhaps he thinks we shall cut him up."

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"Bashfulness," repeated Miss Larolles: "Lord, you don't conceive the thing at all. Why he's at the very head of the *ton*. There's nothing in the world so fashionable as taking no notice of things, and never seeing people, and saying nothing at all, and never hearing a word, and not knowing one's own acquaintance, and always finding fault. All the *ton* do so, and I assure you as to Mr. Meadows, he's so excessively courted by every body, that if he does but say a syllable, he thinks it such an immense favour, you've no idea."

This account, however little alluring in itself, of his celebrity, was yet sufficient to make Morrice covet his farther acquaintance: for Morrice was ever attentive to turn his pleasure to his profit, and never negligent of his interest, but when ignorant how to pursue it. He returned, therefore, to the charge, though by no means with the same freedom he had begun it, and lowering his voice to a tone of respect and submission, he said, "Pray, Sir, may we take the liberty to ask your advice, whether we shall go on, or take a turn back?"

Mr. Meadows made not any answer; but when Morrice was going to repeat his question, without appearing even to know that he was near him, he abruptly said to Miss Larolles, "Pray what is become of Mrs. Mears? I don't see her amongst us."

Lord

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"Lord, Mr. Meadows," exclaimed she, "how can you be so odd? Don't you remember she went on in a chaise to the inn?"

"O, ay, true," cried he; "I protest I had quite forgot it; I beg your pardon, indeed. Yes, I recollect now,—she fell off her horse."

"Her horse! Why you know she was in her chaise."

"Her chaise was it?—ay, true, so it was. Poor thing!—I am glad she was not hurt."

"Not hurt? Why she's so excessively bruised, she can't stir a step! Only conceive what a memory you've got!"

"I am most extremely sorry for her, indeed," cried he, again stretching himself and yawning; "poor soul!—I hope she won't die. Do you think she will?"

"Die!" repeated Miss Larolles, with a scream, "Lord, how shocking! You are really enough to frighten one to hear you."

"But, Sir," said Morrice, "I wish you would be so kind as to give us your vote; the man will else be gone so far, we sha'n't be able to overtake him.—Though I do really believe that is the very fellow coming back to peep at us again!"

"I am *ennuyé* to a degree," cried the Captain; "he is certainly set upon us as a spy, and I must really beg leave to enquire of

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that we could not make out which way he went."

Cecilia, relieved and delighted by this unexpected escape, now recovered her composure, and was content to saunter on without repining.

"But though we could not seize his person," said the Captain, "we have debarrassed ourselves *tout à fait* from his pursuit; I hope, therefore, Miss Larolles will make a revoke of her apprehensions."

The answer to this was nothing but a loud scream, with an exclamation, "Lord, where's my dog?"

"Your dog!" cried Morrice, looking aghast, "good stars! I never thought of him!"

"How excessive barbarous!" cried Miss Larolles, "you've killed him, I dare say. Only think how shocking! I had rather have seen any body served so in the world. I shall never forgive it, I assure you."

"Lord, ma'am," said Morrice, "how can you suppose I've killed him? poor, pretty creature, I'm sure I liked him prodigiously. I can't think for my life where he can be: but I have a notion he must have drop't down somewhere while I happened to be on the full gallop. I'll go look him, however; for we went at such a rate that I never missed him."

Away again rode Morrice.

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"O Lord," cried Miſs Larolles, "now you put it in my head, I dare ſay that wretch has got my dog! only think how horrid!"

"I ſaw plainly," ſaid Mr. Goſport, looking ſignificantly at Cecilia, "that he was feloniouſly inclined, though I muſt confeſs I took him not for a dog-ſtealer."

Miſs Larolles then, running up to Mr. Meadows, called out, "I have a prodigious immenſe favour to aſk of you, Mr. Meadows."

"Ma'am!" cried Mr. Meadows, with his uſual ſtart.

"It's only to know, whether if that horrid creature ſhould come back, you could not juſt ride up to him and ſhoot him, before he gets to us? Now will you promiſe me to do it?"

"You are vaſtly good," ſaid he, with a vacant ſmile; "what a charming evening! Do you love the country?"

"Yes, vaſtly; only I'm ſo monſtrouſly tired, I can hardly ſtir a ſtep. Do *you* like it?"

"The country? O no! I deteſt it! Duſty hedges, and chirping ſparrows! 'Tis amazing to me any body can exiſt upon ſuch terms."

"I aſſure you," cried Miſs Larolles, "I'm quite of your opinion. I hate the country ſo, you've no notion. I wiſh with all my heart it was all under ground. I declare, when I firſt go into it for the ſummer, I cry

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Miss Larolles, in a passion of grief, then declared she was certain that Morrice had maimed him thus on purpose, and desired to know where the vile wretch was?

"He was so much discomposed at the incident," replied the Captain, "that he rode instantly another way. I took up the pretty fellow therefore myself, and have done *mon possible* not to derange him."

The unfortunate little animal was then delivered to Miss Larolles; and after much lamentation, they at length continued their walk, and, without farther adventure, arrived at the inn.

CHAP. VI.

AN INTERRUPTION.

BUT here, instead of finding, as she expected, Mrs. Charlton and fresh horses in readiness, Cecilia saw neither chaise nor preparation; Mrs. Charlton was quietly seated in a parlour, and drinking tea with Mrs. Mears.

Vexed and disappointed, she ordered horses immediately to the chaise, and entreated Mrs.

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Charlton to lose no more time. But the various delays which had already retarded them, had made it now so late that it was impossible to get into London by day-light, and Mrs. Charlton not having courage to be upon the road after dark, had settled to sleep at the inn, and purposed not to proceed till the next morning.

Half distracted at this new difficulty, Cecilia begged to speak with her alone, and then represented in the most earnest manner, the absolute necessity there was for her being in London that night: "Every thing," said she, "depends upon it, and the whole purpose of my journey will otherwise be lost, for Mr. Delvile will else think himself extremely ill used, and to make him reparation, I may be compelled to submit to almost whatever terms he shall propose."

Mrs. Charlton, kind and yielding, withstood not this entreaty, which Cecilia made with infinite pain to herself, from the reluctance she felt to pursuing her own interest and inclination in opposition to those of her worthy old friend: but as she was now circumstanced, she considered the immediate prosecution of her journey as her only resource against first irritating Delvile by an abrupt disappointment, and appeasing him next by a concession which would make that disappointment end in nothing.

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The chaise was soon ready, and Mrs. Charlton and Cecilia were rising to take leave of the company, when a man and horse galloped full speed into the inn-yard, and in less than a minute, Morrice bounced into the room.

"Ladies and gentlemen," cried he, quite out of breath with haste, "I have got some news for you! I've just found out who that person is that has been watching us."

Cecilia, starting at this most unwelcome intelligence, would now have run into the chaise without hearing him proceed; but Mrs. Charlton, who knew neither whom nor what he meant, involuntarily stopt, and Cecilia, whose arm she leant upon, was compelled to stay.

Every one else eagerly desired to know who he was.

"Why I'll tell you," said he, "how I found him out. I was thinking in my own mind what I could possibly do to make amends for that unlucky accident about the dog, and just then I spied the very man that had made me drop him; so I thought at least I'd find out who he was. I rode up to him so quick, that he could not get away from me, though I saw plainly it was the thing he meant. But still he kept himself muffled up, just as he did before. Not so snug, thought I, my friend; I shall have you yet! It's a fine evening, Sir, says I; but he took no notice: so then I came more to the point; Sir, says I, I think I have had

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"Pray, ma'am," continued Morrice, "is it not the same gentleman that was at Mr. Biddulph's?"

Cecilia, half dead with shame and vexation, stammered out, "No, no—I believe not,—I can't tell;—I have not a moment to spare."

And then, at last, she got Mrs. Charlton out of the room, and into the chaise. But thither, before she could drive off, she was followed by Mr. Gosport, who gravely came to offer his advice that she would immediately lodge an information at the Public-office in Bow-Street, that a very suspicious looking man had been observed loitering in those parts, who appeared to harbour most dangerous designs against her person and property.

Cecilia was too much confounded to rally or reply, and Mr. Gosport returned to his party with his speech unanswered.

The rest of the journey was without any new casualty, for late as it was, they escaped being robbed: but neither robbers nor new casualties were wanting to make it unpleasant to Cecilia; the incidents which had already happened, sufficed for that purpose; and the consciousness of being so generally betrayed, added to the delay of her recantation, prepared her for nothing but mortifications to herself, and conflicts with Delvile the most bitter and severe.

It was near ten o'clock before they arrived in Pall-Mall. The house to which Delvile had

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"No," answered she, struggling with all her feelings for composure; "what we wish is easily excused, and I am glad to see you to-night, because otherwise—"

She hesitated; and Delvile, little imagining why, thanked her in the warmest terms for her condescension. He then related how he had been tormented by Morrice, enquired why Mr. Monckton had not accompanied her, and what could possibly have induced her to make her journey so late, or, with so large a party, to be walking upon the high road instead of hastening to London.

"I wonder not," answered she, more steadily, "at your surprise, though I have now no time to lessen it. You have never, I find, received my letter?"

"No," cried he, much struck by her manner; "was it to forbid our meeting till to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" she repeated expressively, "no; it was to forbid—"

Here the door was suddenly opened, and Morrice burst into the room.

The dismay and astonishment of Delvile at the sight of him, could only be equalled by the confusion and consternation of Cecilia; but Morrice, perceiving neither, abruptly called out, "Miss Beverley, I quite beg your pardon for coming so late, but you must know——" then stopping short upon seeing Delvile, "Good lord," he exclaimed, "if here

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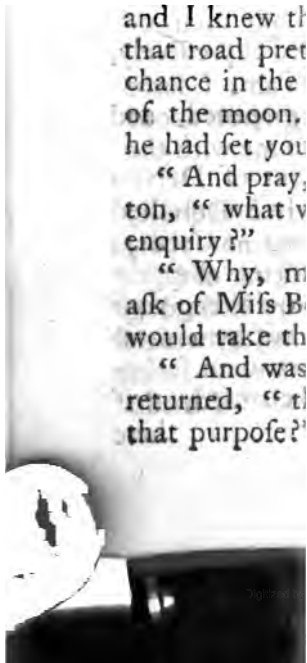

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"Why, ma'am, I'll tell you how that was; I did not mean to have called till to-morrow morning; but as I was willing to know if the poſtillion had given me a right direction, I knocked one ſoft little knock at the door, thinking you might be gone to bed after your journey, merely to aſk if it was the right houſe; but when the ſervant told me there was a gentleman with you already, I thought there would be no harm in juſt ſtepping for a moment up ſtairs."

"And what, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, whom mingled ſhame and vexation had hitherto kept ſilent, "is your buſineſs with me?"

"Why, ma'am, I only juſt called to give you a direction to a moſt excellent dog-doctor, as we call him, that lives at the corner of——"

"A dog-doctor, Sir?" repeated Cecilia, "and what have I to do with any ſuch direction?"

"Why you muſt know, ma'am, I have been in the greateſt concern imaginable about that accident which happened to me with the poor little dog, and ſo,——"

"What little dog, Sir?" cried Delvile, who now began to conclude he was not ſober, "do you know what you are talking of?"

"Yes, Sir, for it was that very little dog you made me drop out of my arms, by which means he broke his other leg."

"*I* made

"*I* made you drop him?" cried Delvile, angrily, "I believe, Sir, you had much better call ſome other time; it does not appear to me that you are in a proper ſituation for remaining here at preſent."

"Sir, I ſhall be gone in an inſtant," anſwered Morrice; "I merely wanted to beg the favour of Miſs Beverley to tell that young lady that owned the dog, that if ſhe will carry him to this man, I am ſure he will make a cure of him."

"Come, Sir," ſaid Delvile, convinced now of his inebriety, "if you pleaſe we will walk away together."

"I don't mean to take *you* away, Sir," ſaid Morrice, looking very ſignificantly, "for I ſuppoſe you have not rode ſo hard to go ſo ſoon; but as to me, I'll only write the direction, and be off."

Delvile, amazed and irritated at ſo many following ſpecimens of ignorant aſſurance would not, in his preſent eagerneſs, have ſcrupled turning him out of the houſe, had he not thought it imprudent, upon ſuch an occaſion, to quarrel with him, and improper at ſo late an hour, to be left behind: he therefore only, while he was writing the direction, told Cecilia, in a low voice, that he would get rid of him and return in an inſtant."

They then went together; leaving Cecilia in an agony of diſtreſs ſurpaſſing all ſhe had hitherto experienced. "Ah, Mrs. Charton

ton," ſhe cried, "what refuge have I now from ridicule, or perhaps diſgrace! Mr. Delvile has been detected watching me in diſguiſe! he has been diſcovered at this late hour meeting me in private! The ſtory will reach his family with all the hyperbole of exaggeration;——how will his noble mother diſdain me! how cruelly ſhall I ſink before the ſeverity of her eye!"

Mrs. Charlton tried to comfort her, but the effort was vain, and ſhe ſpent her time in the bittereſt repining till eleven o'clock. Delvile's not returning then added wonder to her ſadneſs, and the impropriety of his returning at all ſo late, grew every inſtant more glaring.

At laſt, though in great diſturbance, and evidently much ruffled in his temper, he came; "I feared," he cried, "I had paſſed the time for admittance, and the torture I have ſuffered from being detained has almoſt driven me wild. I have been in miſery to ſee you again,——your looks, your manner,—the letter you talk of,—all have filled me with alarm, and though I know not what it is I have to dread, I find it impoſſible to reſt a moment without ſome explanation. Tell me, then, why you ſeem thus ſtrange and thus depreſſed? Tell me what that letter was to forbid? Tell me any thing, and every thing, but that you repent your condeſcenſion."

"That

" That letter," said Cecilia, " would explained to you all. I ſcarce know ho communicate its contents; yet I hope you hear with patience what I acknowledge I reſolved upon only from neceſſity. That ter was to tell you that to-morrow we n not meet; — it was to prepare you, ind for our meeting, perhaps, never more!'.

" Gracious heaven!" exclaimed he, ſt ing, " what is it you mean?"

" That I have made a promiſe too raſh be kept; that you muſt pardon me if, late it is, I retract, ſince I am convinced it w wrong, and muſt be wretched in perfomi it."

Confounded and diſmayed, for a mome he continued ſilent, and then paſſionately ca ed out, " Who has been with you to defan me in your opinion? — Who has barbarouſ wronged my character ſince I left you la Monday? Mr. Monckton received me coldl has he injured me in your eſteem? Tell, te me but to whom I owe this change, that m vindication, if it reſtores not your favour, ma at leaſt make you ceaſe to bluſh that once was honoured with ſome ſhare of it!"

" It wants not to be reſtored," ſaid Cecilia, with much ſoftneſs, " ſince it has never been alienated. Be ſatisfied that I think of you as I thought when we laſt parted, and generouſly forbear to reproach me, when I aſſure you I

am actuated by principles which you ought not to disapprove."

"And are you then unchanged?" cried he more gently, "and is your esteem for me still——"

"I thought it justice to say so once," cried she, hastily interrupting him, "but exact from me nothing more. It is too late for us now to talk any longer; to-morrow you may find my letter at Mrs. Roberts's, and that, short as it is, contains my resolution and its cause."

"Never," cried he vehemently, "can I quit you without knowing it! I would not linger till to-morrow in this suspense to be master of the universe!"

"I have told it you, Sir, already: whatever is clandestine carries a consciousness of evil, and so repugnant do I find it to my disposition and opinions, that till you give me back the promise I so unworthily made, I must be a stranger to peace, because at war with my own actions and myself."

"Recover, then, your peace," cried Delvile, with much emotion, "for I here acquit you of all promise!—to fetter, to compel you, were too inhuman to afford me any happiness. Yet hear me, dispassionately hear me, and deliberate a moment before you resolve upon my exile. Your scruples I am not now going to combat, I grieve that they are so powerful, but I have no new arguments with which to oppose them; all I have to say, is,

that

that it is now too late for a retreat t
them."

True, Sir, and far too true! ye
ways beſt to do right, however ta
ways better to repent, than to grow
wrong."

" Suffer not, however, your
my family to make you forget w
yourſelf as well as to me: the fe
you, led me juſt now to conceal
fear now urges me to mention.
I have had in view is already k
and in a very ſhort time there
ignorant of it. That impud
Morrice, had the effrontery
my paſſion for you, and th
him with great aſperity, he
a coffee-houſe, whither I w
him. There I forced myſ
him engaged with a new
through various private
returned hither; but ju
when, the moment I k
perceived him again at

" Did he, then, fe

" I angrily deman
thus purſuing me; he
my pardon, and ſai
ſhould come back, a
lowed me to ſee if
for an inſtant whet
in him, but believi

his impertinence immaterial, I did neither,—the door opened, and I came in."

He ſtopt; but Cecilia was too much ſhocked to anſwer him.

"Now then," ſaid he, "weigh your objections againſt the conſequences which muſt follow. It is diſcovered I attended you in town; it will be preſumed I had your permiſſion for ſuch attendance: to ſeparate, therefore, now, will be to no purpoſe with reſpect to that delicacy which makes you wiſh it. It will be food for conjecture, for enquiry, for wonder, almoſt while both our names are remembered, and while to me it will bring the keeneſt miſery in the ſeverity of my diſappointment, it will caſt over your own conduct a veil of myſtery and obſcurity wholly ſubverſive of that unclouded openneſs, that fair, tranſparent ingenuouſneſs, by which it has hitherto been diſtinguiſhed."

"Alas, then," ſaid ſhe, "how dreadfully have I erred, that whatever path I now take muſt lead me wrong!"

"You overwhelm me with grief," cried Delvile, "by finding you thus diſtreſſed, when I had hoped—Oh, cruel Cecilia! how different to this did I hope to have met you! all your doubts ſettled, all your fears removed, your mind perfectly compoſed, and ready, unreluctantly, to ratify the promiſe with ſo much ſweetneſs accorded me!—where now are thoſe hopes!—where now——"

"Why will you not begone?" cried Ce
uneasily, "indeed it is too late to stay."
"Tell me first," cried he, with great
gy, "and let good Mrs. Charlton speak to
ought not every objection to our union, h
ever potent, to give way, without farther
fication, to the certainty that our intended
must become public? Who that hears of
meeting in London, at such a season, in
circumstances, and at such hours, will"
"And why," cried Cecilia, angrily, "
you mention them, and yet stay?"
"I *must* speak now," answered he
quickness, "or lose for ever all that is dea
me, and add to the misery of that loss,
heart-piercing reflection of having injured
whom of all the world I most love, most
lue, and most revere."
"And how injured?" cried Cecilia, l
alarmed and half displeased; "Surely I m
strangely have lived to fear now the voice
calumny?"
"If any one has ever," returned he, "
lived as to dare defy it, Miss Beverley is s
but though safe by the established purity
your character from calumny, there are ot
and scarce less invidious attacks, from whi
no one is exempt, and of which the refinemen
the sensibility of your mind, will render y
but the more susceptible: ridicule has shaf
and impertinence has arrows, which thou
against innocence they may be levelled in va
ha

hers always the power of wounding tranquillity."

struck with a truth which she could not controvert, Cecilia sighed deeply, but spoke not.

"Mr. Delvile is right," said Mrs. Charlton, "and though your plan, my dear Cecilia, was certainly virtuous and proper, when you set out from Bury, the purpose of your journey must now be made so public, that it will no longer be judicious nor rational."

Delvile poured forth his warmest thanks for this friendly interposition, and then, strengthened by such an advocate, re-urged all his arguments with redoubled hope and spirit.

Cecilia, disturbed, uncertain, comfortless, could frame her mind to no resolution; she walked about the room, deliberated,—determined,—wavered and deliberated again.—Delvile then grew more urgent, and represented so strongly the various mortifications which must follow so tardy a renunciation of their intentions, that, terrified and perplexed, and fearing the breach of their union would now be more injurious to her than its ratification, she ceased all opposition to his arguments, and uttered no words but of solicitation that he would leave her.

"I will," cried he, "I will begone this very moment. Tell me but first you will think of what I have said, and refer me not to your letter, but deign yourself to pronounce my

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To this ſhe
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He then tore

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action; and the terror of leaving either dissatisfied, made independence burthensome, and unlimited power a grievance.

The happiness or misery which awaited her resolution, were but secondary considerations in the present state of her mind; her consent to a clandestine action she lamented as an eternal blot to her character, and the undoubted publication of that consent as equally injurious to her fame. Neither retracting nor fulfilling her engagement could now retrieve what was past, and in the bitterness of regret for the error she had committed, she thought happiness unattainable for the remainder of her life.

In this gloomy despondence passed the night, her eyes never closed, her determination never formed. Morning, however, came, and upon something to fix was indispensable.

She now, therefore, finally employed herself in briefly comparing the good with the evil of giving Delvile wholly up, or becoming his for ever.

In accepting him, she was exposed to all the displeasure of his relations, and, which affected her most, to the indignant severity of his mother: but not another obstacle could be found that seemed of any weight to oppose him.

In refusing him she was liable to the derision of the world, to sneers from strangers, and remonstrances from her friends, to becoming

a topic for ridicule, if not for ſlander, and an object of curioſity, if not of contempt.

The ills, therefore, that threatened her marriage, though moſt afflicting, were leaſt diſgraceful, and thoſe which awaited its breach, if leſs ſerious, were more mortifying.

At length, after weighing every circumſtance as well as her perturbed ſpirits would permit, ſhe concluded that ſo late to reject him muſt bring miſery without any alleviation; while accepting him, though followed by wrath and reproach, left ſome opening for future hope, and ſome proſpect of better days.

To fulfil, therefore, her engagement, was her final reſolution.

CHAP. VII.

AN EVENT.

SCARCE leſs unhappy in her deciſion than in her uncertainty, and every way diſſatisfied with her ſituation, her views and herſelf, Cecilia was ſtill ſo diſtreſſed and uncomfortable, when Delvile called the next morning, that he could not diſcover what her determination had been, and fearfully enquired his doom with hardly any hope of finding favour.

But

But Cecilia was above affectation, and a ſtranger to art. "I would not, Sir," ſhe ſaid, "keep you an inſtant in ſuſpenſe, when I am no longer in ſuſpenſe myſelf. I may have appeared trifling, but I have been nothing leſs, and you would readily exculpate me of caprice, if half the diſtreſs of my irreſolution was known to you. Even now, when I heſitate no more, my mind is ſo ill at eaſe, that I could neither wonder nor be diſpleaſed ſhould you heſitate in your turn."

"You heſitate no more?" cried he, almoſt breathleſs at the ſound of thoſe words, "and is it poſſible—Oh my Cecilia!—is it poſſible your reſolution is in my favour?"

"Alas!" cried ſhe, "how little is your reaſon to rejoice! a dejected and melancholy gift is all you can receive!"

"Ere I take it, then," cried he, in a voice that ſpoke joy, pain, and fear all at once in commotion, "tell me if your reluctance has its origin in *me*, that I may rather even yet relinquiſh you, than merely owe your hand to the ſelfiſhneſs of perſecution?"

"Your pride," ſaid ſhe, half ſmiling, "has ſome right to be alarmed, though I meant not to alarm it. No! it is with myſelf only I am at variance, with my own weakneſs and want of judgment that I quarrel,—in *you* I have all the reliance that the higheſt opinion of your honour and integrity can give me."

This was enough
Delvile, not only to
awaken rapture
with delight, as he
apprehenſion, and pou
ledgements with ſo m
tude, that Cecilia im
conciled to herſelf, a
her dejection, partici
ment.

She quitted him as
to acquaint Mrs. Ch
paſſed, and aſſiſt in pr
pany them to the alt
to his new acquaintan
lawyer, to requeſt him
Mr. Monckton in givi

All was now haſte
expedition, and to av
agreed to meet at the
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When the chairs, h
were to carry the two
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vile, and the boldneſs
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ſtruck, and ſo painful

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the moment she was summo
again lost her resolution,
hour that from Delvile was
sunk into a chair, and gave
to anguish and sorrow.

The good Mrs. Charle
console her; a sudden ho
had now seized her spirits
by long struggles, could

In this situation she was
by Delvile, whose uneas
she had failed in her app
to be equalled by that
struck at the sight of
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and apprehension. Ce
could not speak, and the
"And!" she cried, "Mr
are we all when unsup
esteem! how feeble, ho
changeable, when our c
dation but duty!"

Delvile, much relieve
ness forming not from
gently reproached her
and earnestly entreated
"The clergyman," cri
I have left him with
velby; no new objecti
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The every possible argument upon them is Delvile sisted Tranquillity, I conjure you, your awak- ted spirits; and if the truest tenderness, with most animated esteem, and the greatest appro- t admiration, can soften your future ledge, and insure your future peace, every tude, versary of this day will recompense me conso- in for every pang she now suffers!"

her d- Cecilia, half soothed and half ashamed, ment- ng she had in fact nothing new to say.

She object, compelled herself to rise, and to ac- raced by his solicitations, endeavoured passed- mpose her mind, and promised to follow pany t-

to his would not trust her, however, from lawyer- ht, but seizing the very instant of her Mr. M- ed consent, he dismissed the chairs,

All ordering a hackney-coach, preferred expedi- it to that of her again wavering, and agreed d upon accompanying her in it him- secrefy,

to wish- ilia had now scarce time to breathe, be- a place e found herself at the porch of church.

Whe- e hurried her out of the carriage, and were to ffered his arm to Mrs. Charlton. Not tremble was spoken by any of the party till her und- ent into the vestry, where Delvile or- happine- cecilia a glass of water, and having duct, th- made his compliments to the clergy- vile, an- gave her hand to Mr. Singleton, who step she to the altar.

struck, The

The ceremony was now begun, and Cecilia, finding herself past all power of disobeying, soon called her thoughts from wandering, and turned her whole attention to that awful service; to which, though she listened with reverence, her full satisfaction in the object of her vows, made her hear with composure. But when the priest came to that solemn admonition, *If any man can shew just cause why they may not be lawfully joined together*; a conscious tear stole into her eye, and a sigh escaped from Delvile that went to her heart: but, when the priest concluded the admonition with *let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace*, a female voice at some distance, called out in shrill accents, I do.

The ceremony was instantly stopt. The astonished priest immediately shut up the book to regard the intended bride and bridegroom; Delvile started with amazement to see whence the sound proceeded, and Cecilia, aghast, and struck with horror, trembled, and caught hold of Mrs. Charlton.

The consternation was general, and general was the silence, though all of one accord turned round towards the place whence the voice issued: a female form at that moment was seen rushing from a pew, who glided out of the church with the quickness of lightning.

prohibition.—Then yet more anxiously pursuing Cecilia, "why," he continued, "why will you thus leave us?—Why leave the ceremony unfinished?—Mrs. Charlton, what is it you are about?—Cecilia, I beseech you return, and let the service go on."

Cecilia, making a motion with her hand to forbid his following her, still silently proceeded, though drawing along with equal difficulty Mrs. Charlton and herself.

"This is insupportable!" cried Delvile, with vehemence, "turn, I conjure you!—my Cecilia!—my wife!—why is it you thus abandon me?—Turn, I implore you, and receive my eternal vows!—Mrs. Charlton, bring her back,—Cecilia, you *must* not go!"

He now attempted to take her hand, but shrinking from his touch, in an emphatic, but low voice, she said, "Yes, Sir, I must!—an interdiction such as this!—for the world could I not brave it!"

She then made an effort to somewhat quicken her pace.

"Where," cried Delvile, half frantic, "where is this infamous woman!—This wretch who has thus wantonly destroyed us!"

And he rushed out of the church in pursuit of them.

The clergyman and Mr. Singleton, who had hitherto been wondering spectators, came

now

now to offer their assistance to Cecilia. She declined any help for herself, but gladly accepted their services for Mrs. Charlton, who, thunderstruck by all that had past, seemed almost robbed of her faculties. Mr. Singleton proposed calling a hackney coach, she consented, and they stopt for it at the church porch.

The clergyman now began to enquire of the pew-opener, what she knew of the woman, who she was, and how she had got into the church? She knew of her, she answered, nothing, but that she had come in to early prayers, and she supposed she had hid herself in a pew when they were over, as she had thought the church *entirely* empty.

A hackney coach now drew up, and while the gentlemen were assisting Mrs. Charlton into it, Delvile returned.

"I have pursued and enquired," cried he, "in vain, I can neither discover nor hear of her.—But what is all this? Whither are you going?—What does this coach do here?—Mrs. Charlton, why do you get into it?—Cecilia, what are you doing?"

Cecilia turned away from him in silence. The shock she had received, took from her all power of speech, while amazement and terror deprived her even of relief from tears. She believed Delvile to blame, though she knew not in what, but the obscurity of her

fears

fears ſerved only to render them more dreadful.

She was now getting into the coach herſelf, but Delvile, who could neither brook her diſpleaſure, nor endure her departure, forcibly caught her hand, and called out, "You are *mine*, you are my *wife!*—I will part with you no more, and go whitherſoever you will, I will follow and claim you!"

"Stop me not!" cried ſhe, impatiently, though faintly, "I am ſick, I am ill already, —if you detain me any longer, I ſhall be unable to ſupport myſelf!"

"Oh then reſt on *me!*" cried he, ſtill holding her; "reſt but upon me till the ceremony is over!—you will drive me to deſpair and to madneſs if you leave me in this barbarous manner!"

A croud now began to gather, and the words bride and bridgroom reached the ears of Cecilia; who half dead with ſhame, with fear, and with diſtreſs, haſtily ſaid, "you are determined to make me miſerable!" and ſnatching away her hand, which Delvile at thoſe words could no longer hold, ſhe threw herſelf into the carriage.

Delvile, however, jumped in after her, and with an air of authority ordered the coachman to Pall-Mall, and then drew up the glaſſes, with a look of fierceneſs at the mob.

Cecilia

Cecilia had neither spirits nor power to resist him; yet, offended by his violence, and shocked to be thus publicly pursued by him, her looks spoke a resentment far more mortifying than any verbal reproach.

"Inhuman Cecilia!" cried he, passionately, "to desert me at the very altar!—to cast me off at the instant the most sacred rites were uniting us!—and then thus to look at me!—to treat me with this disdain at a time of such distraction!—to scorn me thus injuriously at the moment you unjustly abandon me!—"

"To how dreadful a scene," said Cecilia, recovering from her consternation, "have you exposed me! to what shame, what indignity, what irreparable disgrace!"

"Oh, heaven!" cried he with horror, "if any crime, any offence of mine has occasioned this fatal blow, the whole world holds not a wretch so culpable as myself, nor one who will sooner allow the justice of your rigour. My veneration for you has ever equalled my affection, and could I think it was through *me* you have suffered any indignity, I should soon abhor myself as you seem to abhor me. But what is it I have done? How have I thus incensed you! By what action, by what guilt have I incurred this displeasure?"

"Whence," cried she, "came that voice which still vibrates in my ear? The prohibition could not be on *my* account, since none

to

to whom I am known have either right or interest in even wishing it."

"What an inference is this! Over me, then, do you conclude this woman had any power?"

Here they stopt at the lodgings. Delvile handed both the ladies out. Cecilia, eager to avoid his importunities, and dreadfully disturbed, hastily past him, and ran up stairs; but Mrs. Charlton refused not his arm, on which she lent till they reached the drawing-room.

Cecilia then rang the bell for her servant, and gave orders that a post chaise might be sent for immediately.

Delvile now felt offended in his turn; but suppressing his vehemence, he gravely and quietly said, "Determined as you are to leave me, indifferent to my peace, and incredulous of my word, deign, at least, before we part, to be more explicit in your accusation, and tell me if indeed it is possible you can suspect that the wretch who broke off the ceremony, had ever from me received provocation for such an action?"

"I know not what to suspect," said Cecilia, "where every thing is thus involved in obscurity; but I must own I should have some difficulty to think those words the effect of chance, or to credit that their speaker was concealed without design."

"You

"You are right, then, madam," cried he, resentfully, "to discard me! to treat me with contempt, to banish me without repugnance, since I see you believe me capable of duplicity, and imagine I am better informed in this affair than I appear to be. You have said I shall make you miserable,—no, madam, no! your happiness and misery depend not upon one you hold so worthless!"

"On whatever they depend," said Cecilia, "I am too little at ease for discussion. I would no more be daring than superstitious, but none of our proceedings have prospered, and since their privacy has always been contrary both to my judgment and my principles, I know not how to repine at a failure I cannot think unmerited. Mrs. Charlton, our chaise is coming; you will be ready, I hope, to set off in it directly?"

Delvile, too angry to trust himself to speak, now walked about the room, and endeavoured to calm himself, but so little was his success, that though silent till the chaise was announced, when he heard that dreaded sound, and saw Cecilia steady in her purpose of departing, he was so much shocked and afflicted, that, clasping his hands in a transport of passion and grief, he exclaimed, "This, then, Cecilia, is your faith! this is the felicity you bid me hope! this is the recompence of my sufferings, and the performance of your engagement!"

Cecilia,

Cecilia, ſtruck by theſe reproaches, turned back; but while ſhe heſitated how to anſwer them, he went on. "You are inſenſible to my miſery, and impenetrable to my entreaties; a ſecret enemy has had power to make me odious in your ſight, though for her enmity ſhe can aſſign no cauſe, though even her exiſtence was this morning unknown to me! Ever ready to abandon, and moſt willing to condemn me, you have more confidence in a vague conjecture than in all you have obſerved of the whole tenour of my character. Without knowing why, you are diſpoſed to believe me criminal; without deigning to ſay wherefore, you are eager to banish me your preſence? Yet ſcarce could a conſciouſneſs of guilt itſelf wound me ſo forcibly, ſo keenly, as your ſuſpecting I am guilty!"

"Again, then," cried Cecilia, "ſhall I ſubject myſelf to a ſcene of ſuch diſgrace and horror? No, never!—The puniſhment of my error ſhall at leaſt ſecure its reformation. Yet if I merit your reproaches, I deſerve not your regard; ceaſe, therefore, to profeſs any for me, or make them no more."

"Shew but to them," cried he, "the ſmalleſt ſenſibility, ſhew but for me the moſt diſtant concern, and I will try to bear my diſappointment without murmuring, and ſubmit to your decrees as to thoſe from which there is no appeal. But to wound without deigning even to look at what you deſtroy,—to ſhoot at random.

random those arrows that are pointed with poison,—to see them fasten on the heart, and corrode its vital functions, yet look on without compunction, or turn away with cold disdain,—Oh where is the candour I thought lodged in Cecilia: where the justice, the equity, I believed a part of herself!"

"After all that has past," said Cecilia, sensibly touched by his distress, "I expected not these complaints, nor that, from me, any assurances would be wanted; yet, if it will quiet your mind, if it will better reconcile you to our separation ——"

"Oh, fatal prelude!" interrupted he, "what on earth can quiet my mind that leads to our separation?—Give to me no condescension with any such view,—preserve your indifference, persevere in your coldness, triumph still in your power of inspiring those feelings you can never return,—all, every thing is more supportable than to talk of our separation!"

"Yet, how," cried she, "parted, torn asunder as we have been, how is it now to be avoided?"

"Trust in my honour! Shew me but the confidence which I will venture to say I deserve, and then will that union no longer be impeded, which in future, I am certain, will never be repented!"

"Good heaven, what a request! faith so implicit would be frenzy."

"You

"You doubt, then, my integrity? You ſuſpect——"

"Indeed I do not; yet in a caſe of ſuch importance, what ought to guide me but my own reaſon, my own conſcience, my own ſenſe of right? Pain me not, therefore, with reproaches, diſtreſs me no more with entreaties, when I ſolemnly declare that no earthly conſideration ſhall ever again make me promiſe you my hand, while the terror of Mrs. Delvile's diſpleaſure has poſſeſſion of my heart. And now adieu."

"You give me, then, up?"

"Be patient, I beſeech you; and attempt not to follow me; 'tis a ſtep I cannot permit."

"Not follow you? And who has power to prevent me?"

"*I* have, Sir, if to incur my endleſs reſentment is of any conſequence to you."

She then, with an air of determined ſteadineſs, moved on; Mrs. Charlton, aſſiſted by the ſervants, being already upon the ſtairs.

"O tyranny!" cried he, "what ſubmiſſion is it you exact! — May I not even enquire into the dreadful myſtery of this morning?"

"Yes, certainly."

"And may I not acquaint you with it, ſhould it be diſcovered?"

"I ſhall not be ſorry to hear it. Adieu."

She was now half way down the ſtairs; when, loſing all forbearance, he haſtily flew after her, and endeavouring to ſtop her, called out,

out, "If you do not hate and detest me,—if I am not loathsome and abhorrent to you, O quit me not thus insensibly!—Cecilia! my beloved Cecilia!—speak to me, at least, one word of less severity! Look at me once more, and tell me we part not for ever!"

Cecilia then turned round, and while a starting tear shewed her sympathetic distress, said, "Why will you thus oppress me with entreaties I ought not to gratify?—Have I not accompanied you to the altar,—and can you doubt what I have thought of you?"

"*Have* thought!——Oh, Cecilia!—is it then all over?"

"Pray suffer me to go quietly, and fear not I shall go too happily! Suppress your own feelings, rather than seek to awaken mine. Alas! there is little occasion!——Oh, Mr. Delvile! were our connection opposed by no duty, and repugnant to no friends, were it attended by no impropriety, and carried on with no necessity of disguise,—you would not thus charge me with indifference, you would not suspect me of insensibility,—Oh no! the choice of my heart would then be its glory, and all I now blush to feel, I should openly and with pride acknowledge!"

She then hurried to the chaise, Delvile pursuing her with thanks and blessings, and gratefully assuring her, as he handed her into it, that he would obey all her injunctions, and not even attempt to see her, till he could bring her

her, for no intelligence concerning the morning's transaction.

The chaise then drove off.

CHAP. VIII.

A CONSTERNATION.

THE journey was melancholy and tedious: Mrs. Charlton, extremely fatigued by the unusual hurry and exercise both of mind and body which she had lately gone through, was obliged to travel very slowly, and to lie upon the road. Cecilia, however, was in no haste to proceed: she was going to no one she wished to see, she was wholly without expectation of meeting with anything that could give her pleasure. The unfortunate expedition in which she had been engaged, left her now nothing but regret, and only promised her in future sorrow and mortification.

Mrs. Charlton, after her return home, still continued ill, and Cecilia, who constantly attended her, had the additional affliction of imputing her indisposition to herself. Every thing she thought conspired to punish the error she had committed; her proceedings were discovered, though her motives were unknown; the

the Delvile family could not fail to hear of her enterprize, and while they attributed it to her temerity, they would exult in its failure: but chiefly hung upon her mind the unaccountable prohibition of her marriage. Whence that could proceed she was wholly without ability to divine, yet her surmises were not more fruitless than various. At one moment she imagined it some frolic of Morrice, at another some perfidy of Monckton, and at another an idle and unmeaning trick of some stranger to them all. But none of these suppositions carried with them any air of probability; Morrice, even if he had watched their motions and pursued them to the church, which his inquisitive impertinence made by no means impossible, could yet hardly have had either time or opportunity to engage any woman in so extraordinary an undertaking; Mr. Monckton, however averse to the connection, she considered as a man of too much honour to break it off in a manner so alarming and disgraceful; and mischief so wanton in any stranger, seemed to require a share of unfeeling effrontery, which could fall to the lot of so few as to make this suggestion unnatural and incredible.

Sometimes she imagined that Delvile might formerly have been affianced to some woman, who, having accidentally discovered his intentions, took this desperate method of rendering them abortive: but this was a short-lived thought,

and ſpeedily gave way to her eſteem for his general character, and her confidence in the firmneſs of his probity.

All, therefore, was dark and myſterious; conjecture was baffled, and meditation was uſeleſs. Her opinions were unfixed, and her heart was miſerable; ſhe could only be ſteady in believing Delvile as unhappy as herſelf, and only find conſolation in believing him, alſo, as blameleſs.

Three days paſſed thus, without incident or intelligence; her time wholly occupied in attending Mrs. Charlton; her thoughts all engroſſed upon her own ſituation: but upon the fourth day ſhe was informed that a lady was in the parlour, who deſired to ſpeak with her.

She preſently went down ſtairs,—and, upon entering the room, perceived Mrs. Delvile!

Seized with aſtoniſhment and fear, ſhe ſtopt ſhort, and, looking aghaſt, held by the door, robbed of all power to receive ſo unexpected and unwelcome a viſitor, by an internal ſenſation of guilt, mingled with a dread of diſcovery and reproach.

Mrs. Delvile, addreſſing her with the coldeſt politeneſs, ſaid, "I fear I have ſurpriſed you; I am ſorry I had not time to acquaint you of my intention to wait upon you."

Cecilia then, moving from the door, faintly anſwered, "I cannot, madam, but be ho-

noured by your notice, whenever you are pleaſed to confer it."

They then ſat down; Mrs. Delvile preſerving an air the moſt formal and diſtant, and Cecilia half ſinking with apprehenſive diſmay.

After a ſhort and ill-boding ſilence, "I mean not," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, "to embarraſs or diſtreſs you; I will not, therefore, keep you in ſuſpenſe of the purport of my viſit. I come not to make enquiries, I come not to put your ſincerity to any trial, nor to torture your delicacy; I diſpenſe with all explanation, for I have not one doubt to ſolve: I *know* what has paſſed, I *know* that my ſon loves you."

Not all her ſecret alarm, nor all the perturbation of her fears, had taught Cecilia to expect ſo direct an attack, nor enabled her to bear the ſhock of it with any compoſure: ſhe could not ſpeak, ſhe could not look at Mrs. Delvile; ſhe aroſe, and walked to the window, without knowing what ſhe was doing.

Here, however, her diſtreſs was not likely to diminiſh; for the firſt ſight ſhe ſaw was Fidelle, who barked, and jumped up at the window to lick her hands.

"Good God! Fidelle here!" exclaimed Mrs. Delvile, amazed.

Cecilia, totally overpowered, covered her glowing face with both her hands, and ſunk into a chair.

Mrs. Delvile for a few minutes was ſilent; and then, following her, ſaid, "Imagine not I

am

am making any diſcovery, nor ſuſpect me of any deſign to develop your ſentiments. That Mortimer could love in vain I never believed; that Miſs Beverley, poſſeſſing ſo much merit, could be blind to it in another, I never thought poſſible. I mean not, therefore, to ſolicit any account or explanation, but merely to beg your patience while I talk to you myſelf, and your permiſſion to ſpeak to you with openneſs and truth."

Cecilia, though relieved by this calmneſs from all apprehenſion of reproach, found in her manner a coldneſs that convinced her of the loſs of her affection, and in the introduction to her buſineſs a ſolemnity that aſſured her what ſhe ſhould decree would be unalterable. She uncovered her face to ſhew her reſpectful attention, but ſhe could not raiſe it up, and could not utter a word.

Mrs. Delvile then ſeated herſelf next her, and gravely continued her diſcourſe.

"Miſs Beverley, however little acquainted with the ſtate of our family affairs, can ſcarcely have been uninformed that a fortune ſuch as hers ſeems almoſt all that family can deſire; nor can ſhe have failed to obſerve, that her merit and accompliſhments have no where been more felt and admired: the choice therefore of Mortimer ſhe could not doubt would have our ſanction, and when ſhe honoured his propoſals with her favour, ſhe might na-

finally conclude she gave happiness and pleasure to all his friends."

Cecilia, superior to accepting a palliation of which she felt herself undeserving, now lifted up her head, and forcing herself to speak, said, "No, madam, I will not deceive you, for I have never been deceived myself: I presumed not to expect your approbation,—though in missing it I have for ever lost my own!"

"Has Mortimer, then," cried she, with eagerness, "been strictly honourable? has he neither beguiled nor betrayed you?"

"No, madam," said she, blushing, "I have nothing to reproach him with."

"Then he is indeed my son!" cried Mrs. Delvile, with emotion; "had he been treacherous to you, while disobedient to us, I had indisputably renounced him."

Cecilia, who now seemed the only culprit, felt herself in a state of humiliation not to be borne; she collected, therefore, all her courage, and said, "I have cleared Mr. Delvile; permit me, madam, now, to say something for myself."

"Certainly; you cannot oblige me more than by speaking without disguise."

"It is not in the hope of regaining your good opinion,—that, I see, is lost!—but merely—"

"No, not lost," said Mrs. Delvile, "but if once it was yet higher, the fault was my own,

in

in indulging an expectation of perfection to which human nature is perhaps unequal."

"Ah, then, thought Cecilia, all is over! the contempt I so much feared is incurred, and though it may be softened, it can never be removed!

"Speak, then, and with sincerity," she continued, "all you wish me to hear, and then grant me your attention in return to the purpose of my present journey."

"I have little, madam," answered the depressed Cecilia, "to say; you tell me you already know all that has past; I will not, therefore, pretend to take any merit from revealing it: I will only add, that my consent to this transaction has made me miserable almost from the moment I gave it; that I meant and wished to retract as soon as reflection pointed out to me my error, and that circumstances the most perverse, not blindness to propriety, nor stubbornness in wrong, led me to make, at last, that fatal attempt, of which the recollection, to my last hour, must fill me with regret and shame."

"I wonder not," said Mrs. Delvile, "that in a situation where delicacy was so much less requisite than courage, Miss Beverley should feel herself distressed and unhappy. A mind such as hers could never err with impunity; and it is solely from a certainty of her innate sense of right, that I venture to wait upon her now, and that I have any hope to influence

her upon whose influence alone our whole family must in future depend. Shall I now proceed, or is there any thing you wish to say first?"

"No, madam, nothing."

"Hear me, then, I beg of you, with no predetermination to disregard me, but with an equitable resolution to attend to reason, and a candour that leaves an opening to conviction. Not easy, indeed, is such a task, to a mind pre-occupied with an intention to be guided by the dictates of inclination,—"

"You wrong me, indeed, madam!" interrupted Cecilia, greatly hurt, "my mind harbours no such intention, it has no desire but to be guided by duty, it is wretched with a consciousness of having failed in it! I pine, I sicken to recover my own good opinion; I should then no longer feel unworthy of yours; and whether or not I might be able to regain it, I should at least lose this cruel depression that now sinks me in your presence!"

"To regain it," said Mrs. Delvile, "were to exercise but half your power, which at this moment enables you, if such is your wish, to make me think of you more highly than one human being ever thought of another. Do you condescend to hold this worth your while?"

Cecilia started at the question; her heart beat quick with struggling passions; she saw

the

the ſacrifice which was to be required, and her pride, her affronted pride, aroſe high to anticipate the rejection; but the deſign was combated by her affections, which oppoſed the indignant raſhneſs, and told her that one haſty ſpeech might ſeparate her from Delvile for ever. When this painful conflict was over, of which Mrs. Delvile patiently waited the iſſue, ſhe anſwered, with much heſitation, "To regain your good opinion, madam, greatly, truly as I value it,—is what I now ſcarcely dare hope."

"Say not ſo," cried ſhe, "ſince, if you hope, you cannot miſs it, I purpoſe to point out to you the means to recover it, and to tell you how greatly I ſhall think myſelf your debtor, if you refuſe not to employ them."

She ſtopt, but Cecilia hung back; fearful of her own ſtrength, ſhe dared venture at no profeſſions; yet, how either to ſupport, or diſpute her compliance, ſhe dreaded to think.

"I come to you, then," Mrs. Delvile ſolemnly reſumed, "in the name of Mr. Delvile, and in the name of our whole family; a family as ancient as it is honourable, as honourable as it is ancient. Conſider me as its repreſentative, and hear in me its common voice, common opinion, and common addreſs.

"My ſon, the ſupporter of our houſe, the ſole guardian of its name, and the heir of

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our united fortunes, has selected you, we know, for the lady of his choice, and so fondly has fixed upon you his affections, that he is ready to relinquish us all in preference to subduing them. To yourself alone, then, can we apply, and I come to you—"

"O, hold, madam, hold!" interrupted Cecilia, whose courage now revived from resentment, "I know what you would say; you come to tell me of your disdain; you come to reproach my presumption, and to kill me with your contempt! There is little occasion for such a step; I am depressed, I am self-condemned already; spare me, therefore, this insupportable humiliation, wound me not with your scorn, oppress me not with your superiority! I aim at no competition, I attempt no vindication, I acknowledge my own littleness as readily as you can despise it, and nothing but indignity could urge me to defend it!"

"Believe me," said Mrs. Delvile, "I meant not to hurt or offend you, and I am sorry if I have appeared to you either arrogant or assuming. The peculiar and perilous situation of my family has perhaps betrayed me into offensive expressions, and made me guilty myself of an ostentation which in others has often disgusted me. Ill, indeed, can we any of us bear the test of experiment, when tried upon those subjects which call forth our particular propensities. We may strive to be disinterested, we may struggle to be impartial, but self

ſelf will ſtill predominate, ſtill ſhew us the imperfection of our natures, and the narrowneſs of our ſouls. Yet acquit me, I beg, of any intentional inſolence, and imagine not that in ſpeaking highly of my own family, I mean to depreciate yours: on the contrary, I know it to be reſpectable; I know, too, that were it the loweſt in the kingdom, the firſt might envy it that it gave birth to ſuch a daughter."

Cecilia, ſomewhat ſoothed by this ſpeech, begged her pardon for having interrupted her, and ſhe proceeded.

"To your family, then, I aſſure you, whatever may be the pride of our own, *you* being its offspring, we would not object. With your merit we are all well acquainted, your character has our higheſt eſteem, and your fortune exceeds even our moſt ſanguine deſires. Strange at once and afflicting! that not all theſe requiſites for the ſatisfaction of prudence, nor all theſe allurements for the gratification of happineſs, can ſuffice to fulfil or to ſilence the claims of either! There are yet other demands to which we muſt attend, demands which anceſtry and blood call upon us aloud to ratify! Such claimants are not to be neglected with impunity; they aſſert their rights with the authority of preſcription, they forbid us alike either to bend to inclination, or ſtoop to intereſt, and from generation to generation their injuries will call out for re-

dress, should their noble and long unsullied name be voluntarily consigned to oblivion?"

Cecilia, extremely struck by these words, scarce wondered, since so strong and so established were her opinions, that the obstacle to her marriage, though but one, should be considered as insuperable.

"Not, therefore, to *your* name are we averse," she continued, "but simply to our own more partial. To sink that, indeed, in *any* other, were base and unworthy:—what, then, must be the shock of my disappointment, should Mortimer Delvile, the darling of my hopes, the last survivor of his house, in whose birth I rejoiced as the promise of its support, in whose accomplishments I gloried, as the revival of its lustre,—should *he*, should *my* son be the first to abandon it! to give up the name he seemed born to make live, and to cause in effect its utter annihilation!—Oh how should I know my son when an alien to his family! how bear to think I had cherished in my bosom the betrayer of its dearest interests, the destroyer of its very existence!"

Cecilia, scarce more afflicted than offended, now hastily answered, "Not for me, madam, shall he commit this crime, not on *my* account shall he be reprobated by his family! Think of him, therefore, no more, with any reference to me, for I would not be the cause of unworthiness or guilt in him to be mistress of the universe!"

"Nobly

"Nobly ſaid!" cried Mrs. Delvile, her eyes ſparkling with joy, and her cheeks glowing with pleaſure, "now again do I know Miſs Beverley! now again ſee the refined, the excellent young woman, whoſe virtues taught me to expect the renunciation even of her own happineſs, when found to be incompatible with her duty!"

Cecilia now trembled and turned pale; ſhe ſcarce knew herſelf what ſhe had ſaid, but ſhe found by Mrs. Delvile's conſtruction of her words, they had been regarded as her final relinquiſhing of her ſon. She ardently wiſhed to quit the room before ſhe was called upon to confirm the ſentence, but ſhe had not courage to make the effort, nor to riſe, ſpeak, or move.

"I grieve, indeed," continued Mrs. Delvile, whoſe coldneſs and auſterity were changed into mildneſs and compaſſion, "at the neceſſity I have been under to draw from you a concurrence ſo painful; but no other reſource was in my power. My influence with Mortimer, whatever it may be, I have not any right to try, without obtaining your previous conſent, ſince I regard him myſelf as bound to you in honour, and only to be releaſed by your own virtuous deſire. I will leave you, however, for my preſence, I ſee, is oppreſſive to you. Farewell; and when you *can* forgive me, I think you *will*."

"I have nothing, madam," said Cecilia, coldly, "to forgive; you have only asserted your own dignity, and I have nobody to blame but myself, for having given you occasion."

"Alas," cried Mrs. Delvile, "if worth and nobleness of soul on your part, if esteem and tenderest affection on mine, were all which that dignity which offends you requires, how should I crave the blessing of such a daughter! how rejoice in joining my son to excellence so like his own, and ensuring his happiness while I stimulated his virtue!"

"Do not talk to me of affection, madam," said Cecilia, turning away from her, "whatever you had for me is past,—even your esteem is gone,—you may pity me, indeed, but your pity is mixed with contempt, and I am not so abject as to find comfort from exciting it."

"O little," cried Mrs. Delvile, looking at her with the utmost tenderness, "little do you see the state of my heart, for never have you appeared to me so worthy as at this moment! In tearing you from my son, I partake all the wretchedness I give; but your own sense of duty must something plead for the firmness with which I act up to mine."

She then moved towards the door.

"Is your carriage, madam," said Cecilia, struggling to disguise her inward anguish under an appearance of sullenness, "in waiting?"

Mrs.

Mrs. Delvile then came back, and holding out her hand, while her eyes glistened with tears, said, "To part from you thus frigidly, while my heart so warmly admires you, is almost more than I can endure. Oh, gentlest Cecilia! condemn not a mother who is impelled to this severity, who performing what she holds to be her duty, thinks the office her bitterest misfortune, who foresees in the rage of her husband, and the resistance of her son, all the misery of domestic contention, and who can only secure the honour of her family by destroying its peace!—You will not, then, give me your hand?—"

Cecilia, who had affected not to see that she waited for it, now coldly put it out, distantly courtesying, and seeking to preserve her steadiness by avoiding to speak. Mrs. Delvile took it, and as she repeated her adieu, affectionately pressed it to her lips; Cecilia, starting, and breathing short, from encreasing yet smothered agitation, called out, "Why, why this condescension?—pray,—I entreat you, madam!—"

"Heaven bless you, my love!" said Mrs. Delvile, dropping a tear upon the hand she still held, "heaven bless you, and restore the tranquillity you so nobly deserve!"

"Ah, madam!" cried Cecilia, vainly striving to repress any longer the tears which now forced their way down her cheeks, "why will you break my heart with this kindness! why will

will you ſtill compel me to love,—when now I almoſt wiſh to hate you—"

"No, hate me not," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, kiſſing from her cheeks the tears that watered them, "hate me not, ſweeteſt Cecilia, though in wounding your gentle boſom, I am almoſt deteſtable to myſelf. Even the cruel ſcene which awaits me with my ſon will not more deeply afflict me. But adieu,—I muſt now prepare for him!"

She then left the room: but Cecilia, whoſe pride had no power to reſiſt this tenderneſs, ran haſtily after her, ſaying, "Shall I not ſee you again, madam?"

"You ſhall yourſelf decide," anſwered ſhe; "if my coming will not give you more pain than pleaſure, I will wait upon you whenever you pleaſe."

Cecilia ſighed and pauſed; ſhe knew not what to deſire, yet rather wiſhed any thing to be done, than quietly to ſit down to uninterrupted reflection.

"Shall I poſtpone quitting this place," continued Mrs. Delvile, "till to-morrow morning, and will you admit me this afternoon, ſhould I call upon you again?"

"I ſhould be ſorry," ſaid ſhe, ſtill heſitating, "to detain you,—"

"You will rejoice me," cried Mrs. Delvile, "by bearing me in your ſight."

And ſhe then went into her carriage.

Cecilia,

Cecilia, unfitted to attend her old friend, and unequal to the task of explaining to her the cruel scene in which she had just been engaged, then hastened to her own apartment. Her hitherto stifled emotions broke forth in tears and repinings: her fate was finally determined, and its determination was not more unhappy than humiliating; she was openly rejected by the family whose alliance she was known to wish; she was compelled to refuse the man of her choice, though satisfied his affections were her own. A misery so peculiar she found hard to support, and almost bursting with conflicting passions, her heart alternately swelled from offended pride, and sunk from disappointed tenderness.

CHAP. IX.

A PERTURBATION.

CECILIA was still in this tempestuous state, when a message was brought her that a gentleman was below stairs, who begged to have the honour of seeing her. She concluded he was Delvile, and the thought of meeting him merely to communicate what must so bitterly afflict him, redoubled her distress,

treſs, and ſhe went down in an agony of perturbation and ſorrow.

He met her at the door, where, before he could ſpeak, "Mr. Delvile," ſhe cried, in a hurrying manner, "why will you come? Why will you thus inſiſt upon ſeeing me, in defiance of every obſtacle, and in contempt of my prohibition?"

"Good heavens," cried he, amazed, "whence this reproach? Did you not permit me to wait upon you with the reſult of my enquiries? Had I not your conſent—but why do you look thus diſturbed? — Your eyes are red, — you have been weeping.—Oh, my Cecilia! have *I* any ſhare in your ſorrow?—Thoſe tears, which never flow weakly, tell me, have they—has *one* of them been ſhed upon my account?"

"And what," cried ſhe, "has been the reſult of your enquiries?—Speak quick, for I wiſh to know,—and in another inſtant I muſt be gone."

"How ſtrange," cried the aſtoniſhed Delvile, "is this language! how ſtrange are theſe looks! What new has come to paſs? Has any freſh calamity happened? Is there yet ſome evil which I do not expect?"

"Why will you not anſwer firſt?" cried ſhe; "when *I* have ſpoken, you will perhaps be leſs willing."

"You terrify, you ſhock, you amaze me! What dreadful blow awaits me? For what horror are you preparing me?—That which I have

I have just experienced, and which tore you from me even at the foot of the altar, ſtill remains inexplicable, ſtill continues to be involved in darkneſs and myſtery; for the wretch who ſeparated us I have never been able to diſcover."

"Have you procured, then, no intelligence?"

"No, none; though ſince we parted I have never reſted a moment."

"Make, then, no farther enquiry, for now all explanation would be uſeleſs. That we *were* parted, we know, though *why* we cannot tell: but that again we ſhall ever meet—" She ſtopt, her ſtreaming eyes caſt upwards, and a deep ſigh burſting from her heart.

"Oh what," cried Delvile, endeavouring to take her hand, which ſhe haſtily withdrew from him, "what does this mean? loveliest, deareſt Cecilia, my betrothed, my affianced wife! why flow thoſe tears which agony only can wring from you?—Why refuſe me that hand which ſo lately was the pledge of your faith? Am I not the ſame Delvile to whom ſo few days ſince you gave it? Why will you not open to him your heart? Why thus diſtruſt his honour, and repulſe his tenderneſs? Oh why, giving him ſuch exquiſite miſery, refuſe him the ſmalleſt conſolation?"

"What conſolation," cried the weeping Cecilia, "can I give? Alas! it is not, perhaps, *you* who moſt want it!—"

Here

Here the door was opened by one of the Miss Charltons, who came into the room with a message from her grand-mother, requesting to see Cecilia. Cecilia, ashamed of being thus surprised with Delvile, and in tears, waited not either to make any excuse to him, or any answer to Miss Charlton, but instantly hurried out of the room;—not, however, to her old friend, whom now less than ever she could meet, but to her own apartment, where a very short indulgence of grief was succeeded by the severest examination of her own conduct.

A retrospection of this sort rarely brings much subject of exultation, when made with the rigid sincerity of secret impartiality: so much stronger is our reason than our virtue, so much higher our sense of duty than our performance!

All she had done she now repented, all she had said she disapproved; her conduct, seldom equal to her notions of right, was now infinitely below them, and the reproaches of her judgment made her forget for a while the afflictions which had misled it.

The sorrow to which she had openly given way in the presence of Delvile, though their total separation but the moment before had been finally decreed, she considered as a weak effusion of tenderness, injurious to delicacy, and censurable by propriety. "His power over my heart," cried she, "it were now, indeed, too late to conceal, but his power over

my

my understanding it is time to cancel. I am not to be his,—my own voice has ratified the renunciation, and since I made it to his mother, it must never, without her consent, be invalidated. Honour, therefore, to her, and regard for myself, equally command me to fly him, till I cease to be thus affected by his sight."

When Delvile, therefore, sent up an entreaty that he might be again admitted into her presence, she returned for answer that she was not well, and could not see any body.

He then left the house, and in a few minutes she received the following note from him.

To Miss Beverley.

YOU drive me from you, Cecilia, tortured with suspense, and distracted with apprehension,—you drive me from you, certain of my misery, yet leaving me to bear it as I may! I would call you unfeeling, but that I saw you were unhappy; I would reproach you with tyranny, but that your eyes when you quitted me were swoln with weeping! I go, therefore, I obey the harsh mandate, since my absence is your desire, and I will shut myself up at Biddulph's till I receive your commands. Yet disdain not to reflect that every instant will seem endless, while Cecilia must appear to me

unjust,

unjuſt, or wound my very ſoul by the recollection of her in ſorrow.

MORTIMER DELVILE.

The mixture of fondneſs and reſentment with which this letter was dictated, marked ſo ſtrongly the ſufferings and diſordered ſtate of the writer, that all the ſoftneſs of Cecilia returned when ſhe peruſed it, and left her not a wiſh but to leſſen his inquietude, by aſſurances of unalterable regard; yet ſhe determined not to truſt herſelf in his ſight, certain they could only meet to grieve over each other, and conſcious that a participation of ſorrow would but prove a reciprocation of tenderneſs. Calling, therefore, upon her duty to reſiſt her inclination, ſhe reſolved to commit the whole affair to the will of Mrs. Delvile, to whom, though under no promiſe, ſhe now conſidered herſelf reſponſible. Deſirous, however, to ſhorten the period of Delvile's uncertainty, ſhe would not wait till the time ſhe had appointed to ſee his mother, but wrote the following note to haſten their meeting.

To the Hon. Mrs. DELVILE.

Madam,

Your ſon is now at Bury; ſhall I acquaint him of your arrival? or will you announce it yourſelf? Inform me of your deſire, and I will endeavour to fulfil it. As my own agent I regard

regard myself no longer; if, as yours, I can give pleasure, or be of service, I shall gladly receive your commands. I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your most obedient servant,

CECILIA BEVERLEY.

When she had sent off this letter, her heart was more at ease, because reconciled with her conscience: she had sacrificed the son, she had resigned herself to the mother; it now only remained to heal her wounded pride, by suffering the sacrifice with dignity, and to recover her tranquillity in virtue, by making the resignation without repining.

Her reflections, too, growing clearer as the mist of passion was dispersed, she recollected with confusion her cold and sullen behaviour to Mrs. Delvile. That lady had but done what she had believed was her duty, and that duty was no more than she had been taught to expect from her. In the beginning of her visit, and while doubtful of its success, she had, indeed, been austere, but the moment victory appeared in view, she became tender, affectionate, and gentle. Her justice, therefore, condemned the resentment to which she had given way, and she fortified her mind for the interview which was to follow, by an

an earneſt deſire to make reparation both to Mrs. Delvile and herſelf for that which was paſt.

In this reſolution ſhe was not a little ſtrengthened, by ſeriouſly conſidering with herſelf the great abatement to all her poſſible happineſs, which muſt have been made by the humiliating circumſtance of forcing herſelf into a family which held all connection with her as diſgraceful. She deſired not to be the wife even of Delvile upon ſuch terms, for the more ſhe eſteemed and admired him, the more anxious ſhe became for his honour, and the leſs could ſhe endure being regarded herſelf as the occaſion of its diminution.

Now, therefore, her plan of conduct ſettled, with calmer ſpirits, though a heavy heart, ſhe attended upon Mrs. Charlton; but fearing to loſe the ſteadineſs ſhe had juſt acquired before it ſhould be called upon, if ſhe truſted herſelf to relate the deciſion which had been made, ſhe beſought her for the preſent to diſpenſe with the account, and then forced herſelf into converſation upon leſs intereſting ſubjects.

This prudence had its proper effect, and with tolerable tranquillity ſhe heard Mrs. Delvile again announced, and waited upon her in the parlour with an air of compoſure.

Not ſo did Mrs. Delvile receive her; ſhe was all eagerneſs and emotion; ſhe flew to her

her the moment she appeared, and throwing her arms around her, warmly exclaimed, "Oh, charming girl! Saver of our family! preserver of our honour! How poor are words to express my admiration! how inadequate are thanks in return for such obligations as I owe you!"

"You owe me none, madam," said Cecilia, suppressing a sigh; "on *my* side will be all the obligation, if you can pardon the petulance of my behaviour this morning."

"Call not by so harsh a name," answered Mrs. Delvile, "the keenness of a sensibility by which you have yourself alone been the sufferer. You have had a trial the most severe, and, however able to sustain, it was impossible you should not feel it. That you should give up *any* man whose friends solicit not your alliance, your mind is too delicate to make wonderful; but your generosity in submitting, unasked, the arrangement of that resignation to those for whose interest it is made, and your high sense of honour in holding yourself accountable to *me*, though under no tie, and bound by no promise, mark a greatness of mind which calls for reverence rather than thanks, and which I never can praise half so much as I admire."

Cecilia, who received this applause but as a confirmation of her rejection, thanked her only by courtesying; and Mrs. Delvile having

ing ſeated herſelf next her, continued her ſpeech.

"My ſon, you have the goodneſs to tell me, is here—have you ſeen him?"

"Yes, madam," anſwered ſhe, bluſhing, "but hardly for a moment."

"And he knows not of my arrival?"

"No,—I believe he certainly does not."

"Sad, then, is the trial which awaits him, and heavy for me the office I muſt perform. Do you expect to ſee him again?"

"No, — yes, — perhaps, —— indeed I hardly ——"

She ſtammered, and Mrs. Delvile, taking her hand, ſaid, "Tell me, Miſs Beverley, *why* ſhould you ſee him again?"

Cecilia was thunder-ſtruck by this queſtion, and, colouring yet more deeply, looked down, but could not anſwer.

"Conſider," continued Mrs. Delvile, "the *purpoſe* of any farther meeting; your union is impoſſible, you have nobly conſented to relinquiſh all thoughts of it: why then tear your own heart, and torture his, by an intercourſe which ſeems nothing but an ill-judged invitation to fruitleſs and unavailing ſorrow?"

Cecilia was ſtill ſilent; the truth of the expoſtulation her reaſon acknowledged, but to aſſent to its conſequence her whole heart refuſed.

"The

"The ungenerous triumph of little female vanity," said Mrs. Delvile, "is far, I am sure, from your mind, of which the enlargement and liberality will rather find consolation from lessening than from embittering his sufferings. Speak to me, then, and tell me, honestly, judiciously, candidly tell me,—will it not be wiser and more right, to avoid rather than seek an object which can only give birth to regret? an interview which can excite no sensations but of misery and sadness?"

Cecilia then turned pale, she endeavoured to speak, but could not; she wished to comply—yet to think she had seen him for the last time, to remember how abruptly she had parted from him, and to fear she had treated him unkindly;—these were obstacles which opposed her concurrence, though both judgment and propriety demanded it.

"Can you, then," said Mrs. Delvile, after a pause, "can you wish to see Mortimer merely to behold his grief? Can you desire he should see you, only to sharpen his affliction at your loss?"

"O no!" cried Cecilia, to whom this reproof restored speech and resolution, "I am not so despicable, I am not, I hope, so unworthy!—I will be ruled by you wholly; I will commit to you every thing;—yet *once*, perhaps,—no more!——"

" Ah, my dear Miss Beverley! to meet confessedly for *once*, — what were that but planting a dagger in the heart of Mortimer? What were it but infusing poison into your own?"

" If you think so, madam," said she, " I had better—I will certainly—" she sighed, stammered, and stopt.

" Hear me," cried Mrs. Delvile, " and rather let me try to convince than persuade you. Were there any possibility, by argument, by reflection, or even by accident, to remove the obstacles to our connection, then would it be well to meet, for then might discussion turn to account, and an interchange of sentiments be productive of some happy expedient: but here—"

She hesitated, and Cecilia, shocked and ashamed, turned away her face, and cried, " I know, madam, what you would say,—here all is over! and therefore—"

" Yet suffer me," interrupted she, " to be explicit, since we speak upon this matter now for the last time. Here, then, I say, where not ONE doubt remains, where ALL is finally, though not happily decided, what can an interview produce? Mischief of every sort, pain, horror, and repining! To Mortimer you may think it would be kind, and grant it to his prayers, as an alleviation of his misery; mistaken notion! nothing could so greatly augment it. All his passions would be raised, all

all his prudence would be extinguiſhed, his ſoul would be torn with reſentment and regret, and force, only, would part him from you, when previouſly he knew that parting was to be eternal. To yourſelf—"

"Talk not, madam, of *me*," cried the unhappy Cecilia, "what you ſay of your ſon is ſufficient, and I will yield—"

"Yet hear me," proceeded ſhe, "and believe me not ſo unjuſt as to conſider him alone; you, alſo, would be an equal, though a leſs ſtormy ſufferer. You fancy, at this moment, that once more to meet him would ſoothe your uneaſineſs, and that to take of him a farewel, would ſoften the pain of the ſeparation: how falſe ſuch reaſoning! how dangerous ſuch conſolation! acquainted ere you meet that you were to meet him no more, your heart would be all ſoftneſs and grief, and at the very moment when tenderneſs ſhould be baniſhed from your intercourſe, it would bear down all oppoſition of judgment, ſpirit, and dignity; you would hang upon every word, becauſe every word would ſeem the laſt, every look, every expreſſion would be rivetted in your memory, and his image in this parting diſtreſs would be painted upon your mind, in colours that would eat into its peace, and perhaps never be eraſed."

"Enough, enough," ſaid Cecilia, "I will not ſee him,—I will not even deſire it!"

"Is this compliance or conviction? Is what I have said true, or only terrifying?"

"Both, both! I believe, indeed, the conflict would have overpowered me.—I see you are right,—and I thank you, madam, for saving me from a scene I might so cruelly have rued."

"Oh, daughter of my mind!" cried Mrs. Delvile, rising and embracing her, "noble, generous, yet gentle Cecilia! what tie, what connection, could make you more dear to me? Who is there like you? Who half so excellent? So open to reason, so ingenuous in error! so rational! so just! so feeling, yet so wise!"

"You are very good," said Cecilia, with a forced serenity, "and I am thankful that your resentment for the past obstructs not your lenity for the present."

"Alas, my love, how shall I resent the past, when I ought myself to have foreseen this calamity! and I *should* have foreseen it, had I not been informed you were engaged, and upon your engagement built our security. Else had I been more alarmed, for my own admiration would have bid me look forward to my son's. You were just, indeed, the woman he had least chance to resist, you were precisely the character to seize his very soul. To a softness the most fatally alluring, you join a dignity which rescues from their own contempt even the most humble of your admirers.

mirers. You seem born to have all the world wish your exaltration, and no part of it murmur at your superiority. Were any obstacle but this insuperable one in the way, should nobles, nay, should princes offer their daughters to my election, I would reject without murmuring the most magnificent proposals, and take in triumph to my heart my son's nobler choice!"

"Oh, madam," cried Cecilia, "talk not to me thus!—speak not such flattering words!—ah, rather scorn and upbraid me, tell me you despise my character, my family, and my connections,—load, load me with contempt, but do not thus torture me with approbation!"

"Pardon me, sweetest girl, if I have awakened those emotions you so wisely seek to subdue. May my son but emulate your example, and my pride in his virtue shall be the solace of my affliction for his misfortunes."

She then tenderly embraced her, and abruptly took her leave.

Cecilia had now acted her part, and acted it to her own satisfaction; but the curtain dropt when Mrs. Delvile left the house, nature resumed her rights, and the sorrow of her heart was no longer disguised or repressed. Some faint ray of hope had till now broke through the gloomiest cloud of her misery, and secretly flattered her that its dis-

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that she had put it to no nearer trial: sorrow was all she felt; for her mind was too liberal to harbour resentment against a conduct which she saw was dictated by a sense of right, and too ductile and too affectionate to remain unmoved by the personal kindness which had softened the rejection, and the many marks of esteem and regard which had shewn her it was lamented, though considered as indispensable.

How and by whom this affair had been betrayed to Mrs. Delvile she knew not; but the discovery was nothing less than surprising, since, by various unfortunate accidents, it was known to so many, and since, in the horror and confusion of the mysterious prohibition to the marriage, neither Delvile nor herself had thought of even attempting to give any caution to the witnesses of that scene, not to make it known: an attempt, however, which must almost necessarily have been unavailing, as the incident was too extraordinary and too singular to have any chance of suppression.

During this conversation, one of the servants came to inform Cecilia, that a man was below to enquire if there was no answer to the note he had brought in the forenoon.

Cecilia, greatly distressed, knew not upon what to resolve; that the patience of Delvile should be exhausted, she did not, indeed,

wonder, and to relieve his anxiety was now almoſt her only wiſh; ſhe would therefore inſtantly have written to him, confeſſed her ſympathy in his ſufferings, and beſought him to endure with fortitude an evil which was no longer to be withſtood: but ſhe was uncertain whether he was yet acquainted with the journey of his mother to Bury, and having agreed to commit to her the whole management of the affair, ſhe feared it would be diſhonourable to take any ſtep in it without her concurrence. She returned, therefore, a meſſage that ſhe had yet no anſwer ready.

In a very few minutes Delvile called himſelf, and ſent up an earneſt requeſt for permiſſion to ſee her.

Here, at leaſt, ſhe had no perplexity; an interview ſhe had given her poſitive word to refuſe, and therefore, without a moment's heſitation, ſhe bid the ſervant inform him ſhe was particularly engaged, and ſorry it was not in her power to ſee any company.

In the greateſt perturbation he left the houſe, and immediately wrote to her the following lines.

To Miſs BEVERLEY.

I entreat you to ſee me! if only for an inſtant, I entreat, I implore you to ſee me! Mrs. Charlton may be preſent —— all the world,

world, if you wish it, may be present,—but deny me not admission, I supplicate, I conjure you!

I will call in an hour; in that time you may have finished your present engagement. I will otherwise wait longer, and call again. You will not, I think, turn me from your door, and, till I have seen you, I can only live in its vicinity.

M. D.

The man who brought this note, waited not for any answer.

Cecilia read it in an agony of mind inexpressible: she saw, by its style, how much Delvile was irritated, and her knowledge of his temper made her certain his irritation proceeded from believing himself ill-used. She ardently wished to appease and to quiet him, and regretted the necessity of appearing obdurate and unfeeling, even more, at that moment, than the separation itself. To a mind priding in its purity, and animated in its affections, few sensations can excite keener misery, than those by which an apprehension is raised of being thought worthless or ungrateful by the objects of our chosen regard. To be deprived of their society is less bitter, to be robbed of our own tranquillity by any other means, is less afflicting.

Yet to this it was necessary to submit, or incur the only penalty which, to such a mind, would be more severe, self-reproach: she had promised to be governed by Mrs. Delvile; she had nothing, therefore, to do but obey her.

Yet *to turn*, as he expressed himself, *from the door*, a man who, but for an incident the most incomprehensible, would now have been sole master of herself and her actions, seemed so unkind and so tyrannical, that she could not endure to be within hearing of his repulse: she begged, therefore, the use of Mrs. Charlton's carriage, and determined to make a visit to Mrs. Harrel till Delvile and his mother had wholly quitted Bury. She was not, indeed, quite satisfied in going to the house of Mr. Arnott, but she had no time to weigh objections, and knew not any other place to which still greater might not be started.

She wrote a short letter to Mrs. Delvile, acquainting her with her purpose, and its reason, and repeating her assurances, that she would be guided by her implicitly; and then, embracing Mrs. Charlton, whom she left to the care of her grand-daughters, she got into a chaise, accompanied only by her maid, and one man and horse, and ordered the postillion to drive to Mr. Arnott's.

BOOK

BOOK VIII.

CHAPTER I.

A Cottage.

THE evening was already far advanced, and before she arrived at the end of her little journey it was quite dark. When they came within a mile of Mr. Arnott's house, the postillion, in turning too suddenly from the turnpike to the cross-road, overset the carriage. The accident, however, occasioned no other mischief than delaying their proceeding, and Cecilia and her maid were helped out of the chaise unhurt. The servants, assisted by a man who was walking upon the road, began lifting it up; and Cecilia, too busy within to be attentive to what passed without, disregarded what went forward, till she heard her footman call for help. She then hastily advanced to enquire what was the matter, and found that the passenger who had lent his aid, had, by working in the dark, unfortunately slipped his foot under one of the wheels, and so much hurt it, that without great pain he could not put it to the ground.

Cecilia immediately desired that the sufferer might be carried to his own home in the chaise, while she and the maid walked on to Mr. Arnott's, attended by her servant on horseback.

This little incident proved of singular service to her upon first entering the house; Mrs. Harrel was at supper with her brother, and hearing the voice of Cecilia in the hall, hastened with the extremest surprise to enquire what had occasioned so late a visit; followed by Mr. Arnott, whose amazement was accompanied with a thousand other sensations too powerful for speech. Cecilia, unprepared with any excuse, instantly related the adventure she had met with on the road, which quieted their curiosity, by turning their attention to her personal safety. They ordered a room to be prepared for her, entreated her to go to rest with all speed, and postpone any farther account till the next day. With this request she most gladly complied, happy to be spared the embarrassment of enquiry, and rejoiced to be relieved from the fatigue of conversation.

Her night was restless and miserable: to know how Delvile would bear her flight was never a moment from her thoughts, and to hear whether he would obey or oppose his mother was her incessant wish. She was fixt, however, to be faithful in refusing to see him, and

and at least to suffer nothing new from her own enterprise or fault.

Early in the morning Mrs. Harrel came to see her. She was eager to learn why, after invitations repeatedly refused, she was thus suddenly arrived without any; and she was still more eager to talk of herself, and relate the weary life she led, thus shut up in the country, and confined to the society of her brother.

Cecilia evaded giving any immediate answer to her questions, and Mrs. Harrel, happy in an opportunity to rehearse her own complaints, soon forgot that she had asked any, and, in a very short time, was perfectly, though imperceptibly, contented to be herself the only subject upon which they conversed.

But not such was the selfishness of Mr. Arnott; and Cecilia, when she went down to breakfast, perceived with the utmost concern that he had passed a night as sleepless as her own. A visit so sudden, so unexpected, and so unaccountable, from an object that no discouragement could make him think of with indifference, had been a subject to him of conjecture and wonder that had revived all the hopes and fears which had lately, though still unextinguished, lain dormant. The enquiries, however, which his sister had given up, he ventured not to renew, and thought himself but too happy in her presence, whatever might be the cause of her visit.

He

He perceived, however, immediately, the ſadneſs that hung upon her mind, and his own was redoubled by the ſight: Mrs. Harrel, alſo, ſaw that ſhe looked ill, but attributed it to the fatigue and fright of the preceding evening, well knowing that a ſimilar accident would have made her ill herſelf, or fancy that ſhe was ſo.

During breakfaſt, Cecilia ſent for the poſtillion, to enquire of him how the man had fared, whoſe good-natured aſſiſtance in their diſtreſs had been ſo unfortunate to himſelf. He anſwered that he had turned out to be a day-labourer, who lived about half a mile off. And then, partly to gratify her own humanity, and partly to find any other employment for herſelf and friends than unintereſting converſation, ſhe propoſed that they ſhould all walk to the poor man's habitation, and offer him ſome amends for the injury he had received. This was readily aſſented to, and the poſtillion directed them whither to go.

The place was a cottage, ſituated upon a common; they entered it without ceremony, and found a clean looking woman at work.

Cecilia enquired for her huſband, and was told that he was gone out to day-labour.

"I am very glad to hear it," returned ſhe; "I hope then he has got the better of the accident he met with laſt night?"

"It was not him, madam," ſaid the woman, "met with the accident, it was John; there he is, working in the garden."

To

To the garden they all went, and saw him upon the ground, weeding.

The moment they approached he arose, and, without speaking, began to limp, for he could hardly walk, away.

"I am sorry, master," said Cecilia, "that you are so much hurt. Have you had any thing put to your foot?"

The man made no answer, but still turned away from her; a glance, however, of his eye, which the next instant he fixed upon the ground, startled her; she moved round to look at him again,—and perceived Mr. Belfield!

"Good God!" she exclaimed; but seeing him still retreat, she recollected in a moment how little he would be obliged to her for betraying him, and, suffering him to go on, turned back to her party, and led the way again into the house.

As soon as the first emotion of her surprise was over, she enquired how long *John* had belonged to this cottage, and what was his way of life.

The woman answered he had only been with them a week, and went out to day-labour with her husband.

Cecilia then, finding their stay kept him from his employment, and willing to save him the distress of being seen by Mr. Arnott or Mrs. Harrel, proposed their returning home. She grieved most sincerely at beholding in so melancholy an occupation a young man

man of such talents and abilities; she wished much to assist him, and began considering by what means it might be done, when, as they were walking from the cottage, a voice at some distance called out, "Madam! Miss Beverley!" and, looking round, to her utter amazement she saw Belfield endeavouring to follow her.

She instantly stopt, and he advanced, his hat in his hand, and his whole air indicating he sought not to be disguised.

Surprised at this sudden change of behaviour, she then stept forward to meet him, accompanied by her friends: but when they came up to each other, she checked her desire of speaking, to leave him fully at liberty to make himself known, or keep concealed.

He bowed with a look of assumed gaiety and ease, but the deep scarlet that tinged his whole face manifested his internal confusion; and in a voice that attempted to sound lively, though its tremulous accents betrayed uneasiness and distress, he exclaimed, with a forced smile, "Is it possible Miss Beverley can deign to notice a poor miserable day-labourer such as I am? how will she be justified in the beau monde, when even the sight of such a wretch ought to fill her with horror? Henceforth let hysterics be blown to the winds, and let nerves be discarded from the female vocabulary, since a lady so young and fair can stand this shock without hartshorn or fainting!"

"I am

"I am happy," answered Cecilia, "to find your spirits so good; yet my own, I must confess, are not raised by seeing you in this strange situation."

"My spirits!" cried he, with an air of defiance, "never were they better, never so good as at this moment. Strange as seems my situation, it is all that I wish; I have found out, at last, the true secret of happiness! that secret which so long I pursued in vain, but which always eluded my grasp, till the instant of despair arrived, when, slackening my pace, I gave it up as a phantom. Go from me, I cried, I will be cheated no more! thou airy bubble! thou fleeting shadow! I will live no longer in thy sight, since thy beams dazzle without warming me! Mankind seems only composed as matter for thy experiments, and I will quit the whole race, that thy delusions may be presented to me no more!"

This romantic flight, which startled even Cecilia, tho' acquainted with his character, gave to Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott the utmost surprise; his appearance, and the account they had just heard of him, having by no means prepared them for such sentiments or such language.

"Is then this great secret of happiness," said Cecilia, "nothing, at last, but total seclusion from the world?"

"No,

"No, madam," answered he, "it is labour with independence."

Cecilia now wished much to ask some explanation of his affairs, but was doubtful whether he would gratify her before Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott, and hurt to keep him standing, though he leant upon a stick; she told him, therefore, she would at present detain him no longer, but endeavour again to see him before she quitted her friends.

Mr. Arnott then interfered, and desired his sister would entreat Miss Beverley to invite whom she pleased to his house.

Cecilia thanked him, and instantly asked Belfield to call upon her in the afternoon.

"No, madam, no," cried he, "I have done with visits and society! I will not so soon break through a system with much difficulty formed, when all my future tranquillity depends upon adhering to it. The worthlessness of mankind has disgusted me with the world, and my resolution in quitting it shall be immoveable as its baseness."

"I must not venture, then," said Cecilia, "to enquire——"

"Enquire, madam," interrupted he, with quickness, "what you please: there is nothing I will not answer to you,—to this lady, to this gentleman, to any and to every body.—What can I wish to conceal, where I have nothing to gain or to lose? When first, indeed, I saw you, I involuntarily shrunk; a weak shame

shame for a moment seized me, I felt fallen and debased, and I wished to avoid you; but a little recollection brought me back to my senses. And where, cried I, is the disgrace of exercising for my subsistence the strength with which I am endued? and why should I blush to lead the life which uncorrupted Nature first prescribed to man?"

"Well, then," said Cecilia, more and more interested to hear him, "if you will not visit us, will you at least permit us to return with you to some place where you can be seated?"

"I will with pleasure," cried he, "go to any place where you may be seated yourselves; but for me, I have ceased to regard accommodation or inconvenience."

They then all went back to the cottage, which was now empty, the woman being out at work.

"Will you then, Sir," said Cecilia, "give me leave to enquire whether Lord Vannelt is acquainted with your retirement, and if it will not much surprise and disappoint him?"

"Lord Vannelt," cried he, haughtily, "has no right to be surprised. I would have quitted *his* house, if no other, not even this cottage, had a roof to afford me shelter!"

"I am sorry, indeed, to hear it," said Cecilia; "I had hoped he would have known your value, and merited your regard."

"Ill-

"Ill-uſage," anſwered he, "is as hard to relate as to be endured. There is commonly ſomething pitiful in a complaint; and though oppreſſion in a general ſenſe provokes the wrath of mankind, the inveſtigation of its minuter circumſtances excites nothing but deriſion. Thoſe who give the offence, by the worthy few may be hated, but thoſe who receive it, by the world at large will be deſpiſed. Conſcious of this, I diſdained making any appeal; myſelf the only ſufferer, I had a right to be the only judge, and, ſhaking off the baſe trammels of intereſt and ſubjection, I quitted the houſe in ſilent indignation, not chooſing to remonſtrate, where I deſired not to be reconciled."

"And was there no mode of life," ſaid Cecilia, "to adopt, but living with Lord Vannelt, or giving up the whole world?"

"I weighed every thing maturely," anſwered he, "before I made my determination, and I found it ſo much the moſt eligible, that I am certain I can never repent it. I had friends who would with pleaſure have preſented me to ſome other nobleman; but my whole heart revolted againſt leading that kind of life, and I would not, therefore, idly rove from one great man to another, adding ill-will to diſgrace, and purſuing hope in defiance of common ſenſe; no; when I quitted Lord Vannelt, I reſolved to give up patronage for ever."

"I

" I retired to private lodgings to deliberate what next could be done. I had lived in many ways, I had been unfortunate or imprudent in all. The law I had tried, but its rudiments were tedious and diſguſting; the army, too, but there found my mind more fatigued with indolence, than my body with action; general diſſipation had then its turn, but the expence to which it led was ruinous, and ſelf-reproach baffled pleaſure while I purſued it; I have even — yes, there are few things I have left untried,—I have even,— for why now diſguiſe it?—"

He ſtopt and coloured, but in a quicker voice preſently proceeded.

" Trade, alſo, has had its ſhare in my experiments: for that, in truth, I was originally deſtined, — but my education had ill ſuited me to ſuch a deſtination, and the trader's firſt maxim I reverſed, in laviſhing when I ought to have accumulated.

" What, then, remained for me? to run over again the ſame irkſome round I had not patience, and to attempt any thing new I was unqualified: money I had none; my friends I could bear to burthen no longer; a fortnight I lingered in wretched irreſolution,— a ſimple accident at the end of it happily ſettled me; I was walking, one morning, in Hyde Park, forming a thouſand plans for my future life, but quarrelling with them all; when a gentleman met me on horſeback, from whom,

whom, at my Lord Vannelt's, I had received particular civilities; I looked another way not to be seen by him, and the change in my dress since I left his Lordship's made me easily pass unnoticed. He had rode on, however, but a few yards, before, by some accident or mismanagement, he had a fall from his horse. Forgetting all my caution, I flew instantly to his assistance; he was bruised, but not otherwise hurt; I helped him up, and he leant upon my arm; in my haste of enquiring how he had fared, I called him by his name. He knew me, but looked surprised at my appearance; he was speaking to me, however, with kindness, when seeing some gentlemen of his acquaintance galloping up to him, he hastily disengaged himself from me, and instantly beginning to recount to them what had happened, he sedulously looked another way, and joining his new companions, walked off without taking farther notice of me. For a moment I was almost tempted to trouble him to come back; but a little recollection told me how ill he deserved my resentment, and bid me transfer it for the future from the pitiful individual to the worthless community.

"Here finished my deliberation; the disgust to the world which I had already conceived, this little incident confirmed; I saw it was only made for the great and the rich;—poor, therefore, and low, what had I to do in it? I determined to quit it for ever, and to end

end every disappointment, by crushing every hope.

"I wrote to Lord Vannelt to send my trunks to my mother; I wrote to my mother that I was well, and would soon let her hear more. I then paid off my lodgings, and "shaking the dust from my feet," bid a long adieu to London; and, committing my route to chance, strolled on into the country, without knowing or caring which way.

"My first thought was simply to seek retirement, and to depend for my future repose upon nothing but a total seclusion from society; but my slow method of travelling gave me time for reflection, and reflection soon shewed me the error of this notion.

"Guilt, cried I, may, indeed, be avoided by solitude; but will misery? will regret? will deep dejection of mind? no; they will follow more assiduously than ever; for what is there to oppose them, where neither business occupies the time, nor hope the imagination? where the past has left nothing but resentment, and the future opens only to a dismal, unteresting void? No stranger to life, I knew human nature could not exist on such terms; still less a stranger to books, I respected the voice of wisdom and experience in the first of moralists, and most enlightened of men*, and reading the letter of Cowley, I saw the vanity and absurdity of *panting after solitude*†.

"I sought

* Dr. Johnson. † Life of Cowley, p. 34.

"I ſought not, therefore, a cell; but, ſince I purpoſed to live for myſelf, I determinnd for myſelf alſo to think. Servility of imitation has ever been as much my ſcorn as ſervility of dependence; I reſolved, therefore, to ſtrike out ſomething new, and no more to retire, as every other man had retired, than to linger in the world as every other man had lingered.

"The reſult of all you now ſee. I found out this cottage, and took up my abode in it. I am here out of the way of all ſociety, yet avoid the great evil of retreat, *having nothing to do.* I am conſtantly, not capriciouſly employed, and the exerciſe which benefits my health, imperceptibly raiſes my ſpirits in deſpight of adverſity. I am removed from all temptation, I have ſcarce even the power to do wrong; I have no object for ambition, for repining I have no time:—I have found out, I repeat, the true ſecret of happineſs, labour with independence."

He ſtopt; and Cecilia, who had liſtened to this narrative with a mixture of compaſſion, admiration, and cenſure, was too much ſtruck with its ſingularity to be readily able to anſwer it. Her curioſity to hear him had ſprung wholly from her deſire to aſſiſt him; and ſhe had expected from his ſtory to gather ſome hint upon which her ſervices might be offered. But none had occurred; he profeſſed himſelf fully ſatisfied with his ſituation; and though reaſon and probability contradicted

ted the profeſſion, ſhe could not venture to diſpute it with any delicacy or prudence.

She thanked him, therefore, for his relation, with many apologies for the trouble ſhe had given him, and added, "I muſt not expreſs my concern for misfortunes which you ſeem to regard as conducive to your contentment, nor remonſtrate at the ſtep you have taken, ſince you have been led to it by choice, not neceſſity: but yet, you muſt pardon me if I cannot help hoping I ſhall ſome time ſee you happier, according to the common, however vulgar ideas of the reſt of the world."

"No, never, never! I am ſick of mankind, not from theory, but experience; and the precautions I have taken againſt mental fatigue, will ſecure me from repentance, or any deſire of change; for it is not the active, but the indolent who weary; it is not the temperate, but the pampered who are capricious."

"Is your ſiſter, Sir, acquainted with this change in your fortune and opinions?"

"Poor girl, no! She and her unhappy mother have borne but too long with my enterprizes and misfortunes. Even yet they would ſacrifice whatever they poſſeſs to enable me to play once more the game ſo often loſt; but I will not abuſe their affection, nor ſuffer them again to be ſlaves to my caprices, nor dupes to their own deluſive expectations. I have ſent them word I am happy; I have not yet told them how or where. I fear much

the affliction of their disappointment, and, for a while, shall conceal from them my situation, which they would fancy was disgraceful, and grieve at as cruel."

"And is it *not* cruel?" said Cecilia, "is labour indeed so sweet? and can you seriously derive happiness from what all others consider as misery?"

"Not sweet," answered he, "in itself; but sweet, most sweet and salutary in its effects. When I work, I forget all the world; my projects for the future, my disappointments from the past. Mental fatigue is overpowered by personal; I toil till I require rest, and that rest which nature, not luxury demands, leads not to idle meditation, but to sound, heavy, necessary sleep. I awake the next morning to the same thought-exiling business, work again till my powers are exhausted, and am relieved again at night by the same health recruiting insensibility."

"And if this," cried Cecilia, "is the life of happiness, why have we so many complaints of the sufferings of the poor, and why so eternally do we hear of their hardships and distress?"

"They have known no other life. They are strangers, therefore, to the felicity of their lot. Had they mingled in the world, fed high their fancy with hope, and looked forward with expectation of enjoyment; had they been courted by the great, and offered

with

with profusion adulation for their abilities, yet, even when starving, been offered nothing else, had they seen an attentive circle wait all its entertainment from their powers, yet found themselves forgotten as soon as out of sight, and perceived themselves avoided when no longer buffoons!—Oh, had they known and felt provocations such as these, how gladly would their resentful spirits turn from the whole unfeeling race, and how would they respect that noble and manly labour, which at once disengages them from such subjugating snares, and enables them to fly the ingratitude they abhor! Without the contrast of vice, virtue unloved may be lovely; without the experience of misery, happiness is simply a dull privation of evil."

"And are you so content," cried Cecilia, "with your present situation, as even to think it offers you reparation for your past sufferings?"

"Content!" repeated he with energy, "O more than content, I am proud of my present situation! I glory in shewing to the world, I glory still more in shewing to myself, that those whom I cannot but despise I will not scruple to defy, and that where I have been treated unworthily, I will scorn to be obliged."

"But will you pardon me," said Cecilia, "should I ask again, why in quitting Lord Vannelt, you concluded no one else worthy a trial?"

"Because it was less my Lord Vannek, madam, than my own situation, that disgusted me: for though I liked not his behaviour, I found him a man too generally esteemed to flatter myself better usage would await me in merely changing my abode, while my station was the same. I believe, indeed, he never meant to offend me; but I was offended the more that he should think me an object to receive indignity without knowing it. To have had this pointed out to him, would have been at once mortifying and vain; for delicacy, like taste, can only partially be taught, and will always be superficial and erring where it is not innate. Those wrongs, which though too trifling to resent, are too humiliating to be borne, speech can convey no idea of; the soul must feel, or the understanding can never comprehend them."

"But surely," said Cecilia, "though people of refinement are rare, they yet exist; why, then, remove yourself from the possibility of meeting with them?"

"Must I run about the nation," cried he, "proclaiming my distress, and describing my temper? telling the world that though dependent I demand respect as well as assistance; and publishing to mankind, that though poor I will accept no gifts if offered with contumely? Who will listen to such an account? who will care for my misfortunes, but as they may humble me to his service? who will hear my mortifica-

mortifications, but to say I deserve them? what has the world to do with my feelings and peculiarities? I know it too well to think calamity will soften it; I need no new lessons to instruct me that to conquer affliction is more wise than to relate it."

"Unfortunate as you have been," said Cecilia, "I cannot wonder at your asperity; but yet, it is surely no more than justice to acknowledge, that hard-heartedness to distress is by no means the fault of the present times: on the contrary, it is scarce sooner made known, than every one is ready to contribute to its relief."

"And how contribute?" cried he, "by a paltry donation of money? Yes, the man whose only want is a few guineas, may, indeed, obtain them; but he who asks kindness and protection, whose oppressed spirit calls for consolation even more than his ruined fortune for repair, how is his struggling soul, if superior to his fate, to brook the ostentation of patronage, and the insolence of condescension? Yes, yes, the world will save the poor beggar who is starving; but the fallen wretch, who will not cringe for his support, may consume in his own wretchedness without pity and without help!"

Cecilia now saw that the wound his sensibility had received was too painful for argument, and too recent immediately to be healed. She forbore, therefore, to detain him any lon-

ger, but expreſſing her beſt wiſhes, without venturing to hint at her ſervices, ſhe aroſe, and they all took their leave;—Belfield haſtening, as they went, to return to the garden, where, looking over the hedge as they paſſed, they ſaw him employed again in weeding, with the eagerneſs of a man who purſues his favourite occupation.

Cecilia half forgot her own anxieties and ſadneſs, in the concern which ſhe felt for this unfortunate and extraordinary young man. She wiſhed much to deviſe ſome means for drawing him from a life of ſuch hardſhip and obſcurity; but what to a man thus "jealous in honour," thus ſcrupulous in delicacy, could ſhe propoſe, without more riſk of offence, than probability of obliging? His account had, indeed, convinced her how much he ſtood in need of aſſiſtance, but it had ſhewn her no leſs how faſtidious he would be in receiving it.

Nor was ſhe wholly without fear that an earneſt ſolicitude to ſerve him, his youth, talents, and ſtriking manners conſidered, might occaſion even in himſelf a miſconſtruction of her motives, ſuch as ſhe already had given birth to in his forward and partial mother.

The preſent, therefore, all circumſtances weighed, ſeemed no reaſon for her liberality, which ſhe yet reſolved to exert the firſt moment it was un oppoſed by propriety.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

A CONTEST.

THE rest of the day was passed in discussing this adventure; but in the evening, Cecilia's interest in it was all sunk, by the reception of the following letter from Mrs. Delvile.

To Miss Beverley.

I grieve to interrupt the tranquillity of a retirement so judiciously chosen, and I lament the necessity of again calling to trial the virtue of which the exertion, though so captivating, is so painful; but alas, my excellent young friend, we came not hither to enjoy, but to suffer; and happy only are those whose sufferings have neither by folly been sought, nor by guilt been merited, but arising merely from the imperfection of humanity, have been resisted with fortitude, or endured with patience.

I am informed of your virtuous steadiness, which corresponds with my expectations, while it excites my respect. All farther conflict I had hoped to have saved you; and to the triumph of your goodness I had trusted for the recovery of your peace: but Mortimer has disappointed me, and our work is still unfinished.

He avers that he is ſolemnly engaged to you, and in pleading to me his honour, he ſilences both expoſtulation and authority. From your own words alone will he acknowledge his diſmiſſion; and notwithſtanding my reluctance to impoſe upon you this taſk, I cannot ſilence or quiet him without making the requeſt.

For a purpoſe ſuch as this, can you, then, admit us? Can you bear with your own lips to confirm the irrevocable deciſion? You will feel, I am ſure, for the unfortunate Mortimer, and it was earneſtly my deſire to ſpare you the ſight of his affliction; yet ſuch is my confidence in your prudence, that ſince I find him bent upon ſeeing you, I am not without hope, that from witneſſing the greatneſs of your mind, the interview may rather calm than inflame him.

This propoſal you will take into conſideration, and if you are able, upon ſuch terms, to again meet my ſon, we will wait upon you together, where and when you will appoint; but if the gentleneſs of your nature will make the effort too ſevere for you, ſcruple not to decline it, for Mortimer, when he knows your pleaſure, will ſubmit to it as he ought.

Adieu, moſt amiable and but too lovely Cecilia; whatever you determine, be ſure of my concurrence, for nobly have you earned, and ever muſt you retain, the eſteem, the affection, and the gratitude of

AUGUSTA DELVILE.

"Alas,"

"Alas," cried Cecilia, "when shall I be at rest? when cease to be persecuted by new conflicts! Oh, why must I so often, so cruelly, though so reluctantly, reject and reprove the man who of all men I wish to accept and to please!"

But yet, though repining at this hard necessity, she hesitated not a moment in complying with Mrs. Delvile's request, and immediately sent an answer that she would meet her the next morning at Mrs. Charlton's.

She then returned to the parlour, and apologized to Mrs. Harrel and Mr. Arnott for the abruptness of her visit, and the suddenness of her departure. Mr. Arnott heard her in silent dejection; and Mrs. Harrel used all the persuasion in her power to prevail with her to stay, her presence being some relief to her solitude: but finding it ineffectual, she earnestly pressed her to hasten her entrance into her own house, that their absence might be shortened and their meeting more sprightly.

Cecilia passed the night in planning her behaviour for the next day; she found how much was expected from her by Mrs. Delvile, who had even exhorted her to decline the interview if doubtful of her own strength. Delvile's firmness in insisting the refusal should come directly from herself, surprised, gratified, and perplexed her in turn; she had imagined, that from the moment of the discovery, he would implicitly have submitted to the

award of a parent at once so reverenced and so beloved, and how he had summoned courage to contend with her she could not conjecture: yet that courage and that confirmation astonished not more than they soothed her, since, from her knowledge of his filial tenderness, she considered them as the most indubitable proofs she had yet received of the fervor and constancy of his regard for her. But would he, when she had ratified the decision of his mother, forbear all farther struggle, and for ever yield up all pretensions to her? this was the point upon which her uncertainty turned, and the ruling subject of her thoughts and meditations.

To be steady, however, herself, be his conduct what it might, was invariably her intention, and was all her ambition: yet earnestly she wished the meeting over, for she dreaded to see the sorrow of Delvile, and she dreaded still more the susceptibility of her own heart.

The next morning, to her great concern, Mr. Arnott was waiting in the hall when she came down stairs, and so much grieved at her departure, that he handed her to the chaise without being able to speak to her, and hardly heard her thanks and compliments, but by recollection when she was gone.

She arrived at Mrs. Charlton's very early, and found her old friend in the same state she had

had left her. She communicated to her the purpoſe of her return, and begged ſhe would keep her grand-daughters up ſtairs, that the conference in the parlour might be uninterrupted and unheard.

She then made a forced and haſty breakfaſt, and went down to be ready to receive them. They came not till eleven o'clock, and the time of her waiting was paſſed in agonies of expectation.

At length they were announced, and at length they entered the room.

Cecilia, with her utmoſt efforts for courage, could hardly ſtand to receive them. They came in together, but Mrs. Delvile, advancing before her ſon, and endeavouring ſo to ſtand as to intercept his view of her, with the hope that in a few inſtants her emotion would be leſs viſible, ſaid, in the moſt ſoothing accents, "What honour Miſs Beverley does us by permitting this viſit! I ſhould have been ſorry to have left Suffolk without the ſatisfaction of again ſeeing you; and my ſon, ſenſible of the high reſpect he owes you, was moſt unwilling to be gone, before he had paid you his devoirs."

Cecilia courtſied; but depreſſed by the cruel taſk which awaited her, had no power to ſpeak; and Mrs. Delvile, finding ſhe ſtill trembled, made her ſit down, and drew a chair next to her.

Mean while Delvile, with an emotion far more violent, because wholly unrestrained, waited impatiently till the ceremonial of the reception was over, and then, approaching Cecilia, in a voice of perturbation and resentment, said, "In this presence, at least, I hope I may be heard; though my letters have been unanswered, my visits refused, though inexorably you have flown me—"

"Mortimer," interrupted Mrs. Delvile, "forget not that what I have told you is irrevocable; you now meet Miss Beverley for no other purpose than to give and to receive a mutual release of all tie or engagement with each other."

"Pardon me, madam," cried he, "this is a condition to which I have never assented. I come not to release, but to claim her! I am hers, and hers wholly! I protest it in the face of the world! The time, therefore, is now past for the sacrifice which you demand, since scarce are you more my mother, than I consider her as my wife."

Cecilia, amazed at this dauntless declaration, now almost lost her fear in her surprise; while Mrs. Delvile, with an air calm, though displeased, answered, "This is not a point to be at present discussed, and I had hoped you knew better what was due to your auditors. I only consented to this interview as a mark of your respect for Miss Beverley, to whom in propriety it belongs to break off this unfortunate connection."

Cecilia,

Cecilia, who at this call could no longer be silent, now gathered fortitude to say, "Whatever tie or obligation may be supposed to depend upon me, I have already relinquished; and I am now ready to declare—"

"That you wholly give me up?" interrupted Delvile, "is that what you would say:—Oh, how have I offended you? how have I merited a displeasure that can draw upon me such a sentence?—Answer, speak to me, Cecilia, what is it I have done?"

"Nothing, Sir," said Cecilia, confounded at this language in the presence of his mother, "you have done nothing, but yet—"

"Yet what?—have you conceived to me an aversion? has any dreadful and horrible antipathy succeeded to your esteem;—tell, tell me without disguise, do you hate, do you abhor me?"

Cecilia sighed, and turned away her head: and Mrs. Delvile indignantly exclaimed, "What madness and absurdity! I scarce know you under the influence of such irrational violence. Why will you interrupt Miss Beverley in the only speech you ought to hear from her? Why, at once, oppress her, and irritate me, by words of more passion than reason? Go on, charming girl, finish what so wisely, so judiciously you were beginning, and then you shall be released from this turbulent persecution."

"No,

"No, madam, she must not go on!" cried Delvile, "if she does not utterly abhor me, I will not *suffer* her to go on;—Pardon, pardon me, Cecilia, but your too exquisite delicacy is betraying not only my happiness, but your own. Once more, therefore, I conjure you to hear me, and then if, deliberately and unbiassed, you renounce me, I will never more distress you by resisting your decree."

Cecilia, abashed and changing colour, was silent, and he proceeded.

"All that has past between us, the vows I have offered you of faith, constancy, and affection, the consent I obtained from you to be legally mine, the bond of settlement I have had drawn up, and the high honour you conferred upon me in suffering me to lead you to the altar,—all these particulars are already known to so many, that the least reflection must convince you they will soon be concealed from none: tell me, then, if your own fame pleads not for me, and if the scruples which lead you to refuse, by taking another direction, will not, with much more propriety, urge, nay enjoin you to accept me? You hesitate at least,—O Miss Beverley! I see in that hesitation—"

"Nothing, nothing!" cried she, hastily, and checking her rising irresolution; "there is nothing for you to see, but that every way

I now

I now turn I have rendered myself miserable!"

"Mortimer," said Mrs. Delvile, seized with terror as she penetrated into the mental yielding of Cecilia, "you have now spoken to Miss Beverley; and unwilling as I am to obtrude upon her our difference of sentiment, it is necessary, since she has heard you, that I, also, should claim her attention."

"First let her speak!" cried Delvile, who in her apparent wavering built new hopes, "first let her answer what she has already deigned to listen to."

"No, first let her hear!" cried Mrs. Delvile, "for so only can she judge what answer will reflect upon her most honour."

Then solemnly turning to Cecilia, she continued: "You see here Miss Beverley, a young man who passionately adores you, and who forgets in his adoration, friends, family, and connections, the opinions in which he has been educated, the honour of his house, his own former views, and all his primitive sense of duty, both public and private! — A passion built on such a defalcation of principle renders him unworthy your acceptance; and not more ignoble for him would be a union which would blot his name from the injured stock whence he sprung, than indelicate for you, who upon such terms ought to despise him."

"Heavens,

ing mother ſoothe all your affliction, and ſoften all your regret!"

"Oh, madam!" cried Delvile, "for mercy, for humanity, forbear this cruel ſupplication!"

"Nay, more than ſupplication, you have my commands; commands you have never yet diſputed, and miſery, ten-fold miſery, will follow their diſobedience. Hear me, Mortimer, for I ſpeak prophetically; I know your heart, I know it to be formed for rectitude and duty, or deſtined by their neglect to repentance and horror."

Delvile, ſtruck by theſe words, turned ſuddenly from them both, and in gloomy deſpondence walked to the other end of the room. Mrs. Delvile perceived the moment of her power, and determined to purſue the blow: taking, therefore, the hand of Cecilia, while her eyes ſparkled with the animation of reviving hope, "See," ſhe cried, pointing to her ſon, "ſee if I am deceived! can he bear even the ſuggeſtion of future contrition? Think you when it falls upon him, he will ſupport it better? No; he will ſink under it. And you, pure as you are of mind, and ſtedfaſt in principle, what would your chance be of happineſs with a man who never erring till he knew you, could never look at you without regret, be his fondneſs what it might?"

"Oh, madam," cried the greatly ſhocked Cecilia, "let him, then, ſee me no more!—take, take him all to yourſelf! forgive, conſole

lose him! I will not have the misery of involving him in repentance, nor of incurring the reproaches of the mother he so much reverences!"

"Exalted creature!" cried Mrs. Delvile; "tenderness such as this would confer honour upon a monarch." Then, calling out exultingly to her son, "See," she added, "how greatly a woman can act, when stimulated by generosity and a just sense of duty! Follow then, at least, the example you ought to have led, and deserve my esteem and love, or be content to forego them."

"And can I only deserve them," said Delvile, in a tone of the deepest anguish, "by a compliance to which not merely my happiness, but my reason must be sacrificed? What honour do I injure that is not factitious? What evil threatens our union, that is not imaginary? In the general commerce of the world it may be right to yield to its prejudices, but in matters of serious importance, it is weakness to be shackled by scruples so frivolous, and it is cowardly to be governed by the customs we condemn. Religion and the laws of our country should then alone be consulted, and where those are neither opposed nor infringed, we should hold ourselves superior to all other considerations."

"Mistaken notions!" said Mrs. Delvile; "and how long do you flatter yourself this independent happiness would endure? How long

long could you live contented by mere self-gratification, in defiance of the censure of mankind, the renunciation of your family, and the curses of your father?"

"The curses of my father!" repeated he, starting and shuddering, "O no, he could never be so barbarous!"

"He could," said she, steadily, "nor do I doubt but he would. If now, however, you are affected by the prospect of his disclaiming you, think but what you will feel when first forbid to appear before either of us! and think of your remorse for involving Miss Beverley in such disgrace!"

"O speak not such words!" cried he, with agonizing earnestness, "to disgrace her,—to be banished by you,—present not, I conjure you, such scenes to my imagination!"

"Yet would they be unavoidable," continued she, "nor have I said to you all; blinded as you now are by passion, your nobler feelings are only obscured, not extirpated; think, then, how they will all rise in revenge of your insulted dignity, when your name becomes a stranger to your ears, and you are first saluted by one so meanly adopted!—"

"Hold, hold, madam," interrupted he, "this is more than I can bear!"

"Heavens!" still continued she, disregarding his intreaty, "what in the universe can pay you for that first moment of indignity! Think of it well ere you proceed, and

antici-

anticipate your ſenſations, leſt the ſhoc
wholly overcome you. How will th
of your wronged anceſtors riſe into you
cheeks, and how will your heart thr
ſecret ſhame and reproach, when wif
upon your marriage by the name of
verley!"

Delvile, ſtung to the ſoul, attemp
any anſwer, but walked about the r
the utmoſt diſorder of mind. Cecili
have retired, but feared irritating him
extravagance; and Mrs. Delvile, look
him, added, "For myſelf, I would
for I ſhould pity your wife,—but
would I behold my ſon when ſunk int
ject of compaſſion!"

"It ſhall not be!" cried he, in a t
of rage; "ceaſe, ceaſe to diſtract m
content, madam,—you have conqu

"Then you are my ſon!" cried ſh
tuouſly embracing him; "now I kno
my Mortimer! now I ſee the fair pr
his upright youth, and the flattering
tion of my maternal expectations!"

Cecilia, finding all thus concluded
nothing ſo much as to congratulate
their reconciliation; but having o

"Let *me* too,—" her voice failed
ſtopt ſhort, and hoping ſhe had been
would have glided out of the room.

But Delvile, penetrated and tortu
delighted at this ſenſibility, broke

mother, and seizing her hand, exclaimed, "Oh, Miss Beverley, if *you* are not happy —"

"I am! I am," cried she, with quickness; "let me pass,—and think no more of me."

"That voice,—those looks,—" cried he, still holding her, "they speak not serenity!—Oh, if I have injured your peace,—if that heart, which, pure as angels, deserves to be as sacred from sorrow, through my means, or for my sake, suffers any diminution of tranquillity —"

"None, none!" interrupted she, with precipitation.

"I know well," cried he, "your greatness of soul; and if this dreadful sacrifice gives lasting torture only to myself, — if of *your* returning happiness I could be assured, — I would struggle to bear it."

"You *may* be assured of it," cried she, with reviving dignity. "I have no right to expect escaping all calamity, but while I share the common lot, I will submit to it without repining."

"Heaven then bless, and hovering angels watch you!" cried he, and letting go her hand, he ran hastily out of the room.

"Oh, Virtue, how bright is thy triumph!" exclaimed Mrs. Delvile, flying up to Cecilia, and folding her in her arms; "Noble, incomparable young creature! I knew not that so much worth was compatible with human frailty!"

But

But the heroism of Cecilia, in losing its object, lost its force; she sighed, she could not speak; tears gushed into her eyes, and kissing Mrs. Delvile's hand with a look that shewed her inability to converse with her, she hastened, though scarce able to support herself, away, with intention to shut herself up in her own apartment: and Mrs. Delvile, who perceived that her utmost fortitude was exhausted, opposed not her going, and wisely forbore to encrease her emotion, by following her even with her blessings.

But when she came into the hall, she started, and could proceed no further; for there she beheld Delvile, who in too great agony to be seen, had stopt to recover some composure before he quitted the house.

At the first sound of an opening door, he was hastily escaping; but perceiving Cecilia, and discerning her situation, he more hastily turned back, saying, "Is it possible?—To *me* were you coming?"

She shook her head, and made a motion with her hand to say no, and would then have gone on.

"You are weeping!" cried he, "you are pale!—Oh, Miss Beverley! is this your happiness?"

"I am very well,—" cried she, not knowing what she answered, "I am quite well,—pray go,—I am very—" her words died away inarticulated.

"Oh,

"Oh, what a voice is that!" exclaimed he, "it pierces my very ſoul!"

Mrs. Delvile now came to the parlour door, and looked aghaſt at the ſituation in which ſhe ſaw them: Cecilia again moved on, and reached the ſtairs, but tottered and was obliged to cling to the baniſters.

"O ſuffer me to ſupport you," cried he; "you are not able to ſtand—whither is it you would go?"

"Any where,—I don't know—" anſwered ſhe, in faultering accents, "but if you would leave me, I ſhould be well."

And, turning from him, ſhe walked again towards the parlour, finding by her ſhaking frame, the impoſſibility of getting unaided up the ſtairs.

"Give me your hand, my love," ſaid Mrs. Delvile, cruelly alarmed by this return; and the moment they re-entered the parlour, ſhe ſaid impatiently to her ſon, "Mortimer, why are you not gone?"

He heard her not, however; his whole attention was upon Cecilia, who, ſinking into a chair, hid her face againſt Mrs. Delvile: but, reviving in a few moments, and bluſhing at the weakneſs ſhe had betrayed, ſhe raiſed her head, and, with an aſſumed ſerenity, ſaid "I am better,—much better,—— I was rather ſick,—but it is over; and now, if you will excuſe me, I will go to my own room."

She

She then aroſe, but her knees trembled, and her head was giddy, and again ſeating herſelf, ſhe forced a faint ſmile, and ſaid, "Perhaps I had better keep quiet."

"Can I bear this!" cried Delvile, "no, it ſhakes all my reſolution!——loveliest and moſt beloved Cecilia! forgive my raſh declaration, which I here retract and forſwear, and which no falſe pride, no worthleſs vanity ſhall again ſurpriſe from me!——raiſe, then, your eyes——"

"Hot-headed young man!" interrupted Mrs. Delvile, with an air of haughty diſpleaſure, "if you cannot be rational, at leaſt be ſilent, Miſs Beverley, we will both leave him."

Shame, and her own earneſtneſs, now reſtored ſome ſtrength to Cecilia, who read with terror in the looks of Mrs. Delvile the paſſions with which ſhe was agitated, and inſtantly obeyed her by riſing; but her ſon, who inherited a portion of her own ſpirit, ruſhed between them both and the door, and exclaimed "Stay, madam, ſtay! I cannot let you go: I ſee your intention, I ſee your dreadful purpoſe; you will work upon the feelings of Miſs Beverley, you will extort from her a promiſe to ſee me no more!"

"Oppoſe not my paſſing!" cried Mrs. Delvile, whoſe voice, face, and manner, ſpoke the encreaſing diſturbance of her ſoul; "I have but too long talked to you in vain; I

must now take some better method for the security of the honour of my family."

This moment appeared to Delvile decisive; and casting off in desperation all timidity and restraint, he suddenly sprang forward, and snatching the hand of Cecilia from his mother, he exclaimed, "I cannot, I will not give her up!—nor now, madam, nor ever!—I protest it most solemnly! I affirm it by my best hopes! I swear it by all that I hold sacred!"

Grief and horror next to frenzy at a disappointment thus unexpected, and thus peremptory, rose in the face of Mrs. Delvile, who, striking her hand upon her forehead, cried, "My brain is on fire!" and rushed out of the room.

Cecilia had now no difficulty to disengage herself from Delvile, who, shocked at the exclamation, and confounded by the sudden departure of his mother, hastened eagerly to pursue her: she had only flown into the next parlour; but, upon following her thither, what was his dread and his alarm, when he saw her extended upon the floor, her face, hands, and neck, all covered with blood! "Great Heaven!" he exclaimed, prostrating himself by her side, "what is it you have done!—where are you wounded?—what direful curse have you denounced against your son!"

Not able to speak, she angrily shook her head, and indignantly made a motion with her

her hand that commanded him from her sight.

Cecilia, who had followed, though half dead with terror, had yet the presence of mind to ring the bell. A servant came immediately in, and Delvile, starting up from his mother, ordered him to fetch the first surgeon or physician he could find.

The alarm now brought the rest of the servants into the room, and Mrs. Delvile suffered herself to be raised from the ground, and seated in a chair; she was still silent, but shewed a disgust to any assistance from her son, that made him deliver her into the hands of the servants, while, in speechless agony, he only looked on and watched her.

Neither did Cecilia, though forgetting her own sorrow, and no longer sensible of personal weakness, venture to approach her: uncertain what had happened, she yet considered herself as the ultimate cause of this dreadful scene, and feared to risk the effect of the smallest additional emotion.

The servant returned with a surgeon in a few minutes; Cecilia, unable to wait and hear what he would say, glided hastily out of the room, and Delvile, in still greater agitation, followed her quick into the next parlour; but having eagerly advanced to speak to her, he turned precipitately about, and hurrying into the hall, walked in hasty steps up and down

it, without courage to enquire what was paſſing.

At length the ſurgeon came out; Delvile flew to him, and ſtopt him, but could aſk no queſtion. His countenance, however, rendered words unneceſſary; the ſurgeon underſtood him, and ſaid, "The lady will do very well; ſhe has burſt a blood veſſel, but I think it will be of no conſequence. She muſt be kept quiet and eaſy, and upon no account ſuffered to talk, or to uſe any exertion."

Delvile now let him go, and flew himſelf into a corner to return thanks to heaven that the evil, however great, was leſs than he had at firſt apprehended. He then went into the parlour to Cecilia, eagerly calling out, "Heaven be praiſed, my mother has not voluntarily curſed me!"

"O now then," cried Cecilia, "once more make her bleſs you! the violence of her agitation has already almoſt deſtroyed her, and her frame is too weak for this ſtruggle of contending paſſions;—go to her, then, and calm the tumult of her ſpirits, by acquieſcing wholly in her will, and being to her again the ſon ſhe thinks ſhe has loſt."

"Alas!" ſaid he, in a tone of the deepeſt dejection; "I have been preparing myſelf for that purpoſe, and waited but your commands to finally determine me."

"Let us both go to her inſtantly," ſaid Cecilia; "the leaſt delay may be fatal."

She

She now led the way, and approaching Mrs. Delvile, who, faint and weak, was seated upon an arm chair, and resting her head upon the shoulder of a maid servant, said, "Lean, dearest madam, upon *me*, and speak not, but hear us!"

She then took the place of the maid, and desired her and the other servants to go out of the room. Delvile advanced, but his mother's eye, recovering, at his sight, its wonted fire, darted upon him a glance of such displeasure, that, shuddering with the apprehension of inflaming again those passions which threatened her destruction, he hastily sunk on one knee, and abruptly exclaimed, "Look at me with less abhorrence, for I come but to resign myself to your will."

"Mine also," cried Cecilia, "that will shall be; you need not speak it, we know it, and here solemnly we promise that we will separate for ever."

"Revive, then, my mother," said Delvile, "rely upon our plighted honours, and think only of your health, for your son will never more offend you."

Mrs. Delvile, much surprised, and strongly affected, held out her hand to him, with a look of mingled compassion and obligation, and dropping her head upon the bosom of Cecilia, who with her other arm she pressed towards her, she burst into an agony of tears.

"Go, go, Sir," said Cecilia, cruelly alarmed, "you have said all that is neceſſary; leave Mrs. Delvile now, and ſhe will be more compoſed."

Delvile inſtantly obeyed, and then his mother, whoſe mouth ſtill continued to ſpit with blood, though it guſhed not from her with the violence it had begun, was prevailed upon by the prayers of Cecilia to conſent to be conveyed into her room; and, as her immediate removal to another houſe might be dangerous, ſhe complied alſo, though very reluctantly, with her urgent entreaties, that ſhe would take entire poſſeſſion of it till the next day.

This point gained, Cecilia left her, to communicate what had paſt to Mrs. Charlton, but was told by one of the ſervants, that Mr. Delvile begged firſt to ſpeak with her in the next room.

She heſitated for a moment whether to grant this requeſt; but recollecting it was right to acquaint him with his mother's intention of ſtaying all night, ſhe went to him.

"How indulgent you are," cried he, in a melancholy voice as ſhe opened the door; "I am now going poſt to Dr. Lyſter, whom I ſhall entreat to come hither inſtantly; but I am fearful of again diſturbing my mother, and muſt therefore rely upon you to acquaint her what is become of me."

Moſt

"Moſt certainly; I have begged her to remain here to-night, and I hope I ſhall prevail with her to continue with me till Dr. Lyſter's arrival; after which ſhe will, doubtleſs, be guided either in ſtaying longer, or removing elſewhere by his advice."

"You are all goodneſs," ſaid he, with a deep ſigh; "and how I ſhall ſupport—but I mean not to return hither, at leaſt not to this houſe,—unleſs, indeed, Dr. Lyſter's account ſhould be alarming. I leave my mother, therefore, to your kindneſs, and only hope, only entreat, that your own health,—your own peace of mind—neither by attendance upon her,—by anxiety,—by pity for her ſon——"

He ſtopt, and ſeemed gaſping for breath; Cecilia turned from him to hide her emotion, and he proceeded with a rapidity of ſpeech that ſhewed his terror of continuing with her any longer, and his ſtruggle with himſelf to be gone: "The promiſe you have made in both our names to my mother, I ſhall hold myſelf bound to obſerve. I ſee, indeed, that her reaſon or her life would fall the ſacrifice of farther oppoſition: of myſelf, therefore, it is no longer time to think.—I take of you no leave—I cannot! yet I would fain tell you the high reverence—but it is better to ſay nothing——"

"Much better," cried Cecilia, with a forced and faint ſmile; "loſe not, therefore, an inſtant, but haſten to this good Dr. Lyſter."

"I will," answered he, going to the door; but there, stopping and turning round, "one thing I should yet," he added, "wish to say. I have been impetuous, violent, unreasonable, —with shame and with regret I recollect how impetuous, and how unreasonable: I have persecuted, where I ought in silence to have submitted; I have reproached, where I ought in candour to have approved; and in the vehemence with which I have pursued you, I have censured that very dignity of conduct which has been the basis of my admiration, my esteem, my devotion! but never can I forget, and never without fresh wonder remember, the sweetness with which you have borne with me, even when most I offended you.—For this impatience, this violence, this inconsistency, I now most sincerely beg your pardon; and if, before I go, you could so far condescend as to pronounce my forgiveness, with a lighter heart, I think, I should quit you."

"Do not talk of forgiveness," said Cecilia, "you have never offended me; I always knew—always was sure—always imputed—" she stopt, unable to proceed.

Deeply penetrated by the apparent distress, he with difficulty restrained himself from falling at her feet; but after a moment's pause and recollection, he said, "I understand the generous indulgence you have shewn me, an indulgence I shall ever revere, and ever grieve

to have abuſed. I aſk you not to remember me,—far, far happier do I wiſh you than ſuch a remembrance could make you; but I will pain the humanity of your diſpoſition no longer. You will tell my mother—but no matter!—Heaven preſerve you, my angelic Cecilia!—Miſs Beverley, I mean,—Heaven guide, protect, and bleſs you! And ſhould I ſee you no more, ſhould this be the laſt ſad moment——"

He pauſed, but preſently recovering himſelf, added, "May I hear, at leaſt, of your tranquillity, for that alone can have any chance to quiet or repreſs the anguiſh I feel here!"

He then abruptly retreated, and ran out of the houſe.

Cecilia for a while remained almoſt ſtupified with ſorrow; ſhe forgot Mrs. Delvile, ſhe forgot Mrs. Charlton, ſhe forgot her own deſign of apologizing to one, or aſſiſting the other; ſhe continued in the poſture in which he had left her, quite without motion, and almoſt without ſenſibility.

CHAP.

CHAPTER III.

A MESSAGE.

FROM this lethargy of sadness Cecilia was soon, however, awakened by the return of the surgeon, who had brought with him a physician to consult upon Mrs. Delvile's situation. Terror for the mother once more drove the son from her thoughts, and she waited with the most apprehensive impatience to hear the result of the consultation. The physician declined giving any positive opinion, but, having written a prescription, only repeated the injunction of the surgeon, that she should be kept extremely quiet, and on no account be suffered to talk.

Cecilia, though shocked and frightened at the occasion, was yet by no means sorry at an order which thus precluded all conversation; unfitted for it by her own misery, she was glad to be relieved from all necessity of imposing upon herself, the irksome task of finding subjects for discourse to which she was wholly indifferent, while obliged with sedulity to avoid those by which alone her mind was occupied.

The worthy Mrs. Charlton heard the events of the morning with the utmost concern, but charged

charged her grand-daughters to assist her young friend in doing the honours of her house to Mrs. Delvile, while she ordered another apartment to be prepared for Cecilia, to whom she administered all the consolation her friendly zeal could suggest.

Cecilia, however unhappy, had too just a way of thinking to indulge in selfish grief, where occasion called her to action for the benefit of others: scarce a moment, therefore, now did she allow to sorrow and herself, but assiduously bestowed the whole of her time upon her two sick friends, dividing her attention according to their own desire or convenience, without consulting or regarding any choice of her own. Choice, indeed, she had none; she loved Mrs. Charlton, she revered Mrs. Delvile; the warmest wish with which her heart glowed, was the recovery of both, but too deep was her affliction to receive pleasure from either.

Two days passed thus, during which the constancy of her attendance, which at another time would have fatigued her, proved the only relief she was capable of receiving. Mrs. Delvile was evidently affected by her vigilant tenderness, but seemed equally desirous with herself to make use of the prohibition to speech as an excuse for uninterrupted silence. She enquired not even after her son, though the eagerness of her look towards the door, whenever it was opened, shewed either a hope,

or an apprehenſion that he might even ... Cecilia wiſhed to tell her whither he was gone, but dreaded truſting her voice with his name; and their ſilence, after a while, ſeemed ſo much by mutual conſent, that ſhe had ſoon as little courage as ſhe had inclination to break it.

The arrival of Dr. Lyſter gave her much ſatisfaction, for upon him reſted her hopes of Mrs. Delvile's re-eſtabliſhment. He ſent for her down ſtairs, to enquire whether he was expected; and hearing that he was not, deſired her to announce him, as the ſmalleſt emotion might do miſchief.

She returned up ſtairs, and after a ſhort preparation, ſaid, "Your favourite Dr. Lyſter, madam, is come, and I ſhall be much the happier for having you under his care."

"Dr. Lyſter!" cried ſhe, "who ſent for him?"

"I believe—I fancy—Mr. Delvile fetched him."

"My ſon?—is he here, then?"

"No,—he went, the moment he left you, for Dr. Lyſter,—and Dr. Lyſter is come by himſelf."

"Does he write to you?"

"No, indeed!—he writes not—he comes not—deareſt madam be ſatisfied, he will do neither to *me* ever more!"

"Exemplary young man!" cried ſhe, in a voice hardly audible, "how great is his loſs!

loss!—unhappy Mortimer!—ill-fated, and ill-rewarded!"

She sighed, and said no more; but this short conversation, the only one which had passed between them since her illness, agitated her so much, that Dr. Lyster, who now came up stairs, found her in a state of trembling and weakness that both alarmed and surprised him. Cecilia, glad of an opportunity to be gone, left the room, and sent, by Dr. Lyster's desire, for the physician and surgeon who had already attended.

After they had been some time with their patient, they retired to a consultation, and when it was over, Dr. Lyster waited upon Cecilia in the parlour, and assured her he had no apprehension of danger for Mrs. Delvile: "Though, for another week, he added, I would have her continue *your* patient, as she is not yet fit to be removed. But pray mind that she is kept quiet; let nobody go near her, not even her own son. By the way he is waiting for me at the inn, so I'll just speak again to his mother, and be gone."

Cecilia was well pleased by this accidental information, to learn both the anxiety of Delvile for his mother, and the steadiness of his forbearance for himself. When Dr. Lyster came down stairs again, "I shall stay," he said, "till to-morrow, but I hope she will be able in another week to get to Bristol. In the mean time I shall leave her, I see, with an excellent

cellent nurse. But, my good young lady, in your care of her, don't neglect yourself; I am not quite pleased with your looks, though it is but an old fashioned speech to tell you so.—What have you been doing to yourself?"

"Nothing;" said she, a little embarrassed; "but had you not better have some tea?"

"Why, yes, I think I had;—but what shall I do with my young man?"

Cecilia understood the hint, but coloured, and made no answer.

"He is waiting for me," he continued, "at the inn; however, I never yet knew the young man I would prefer to a young woman, so if you will give me some tea here, I shall certainly jilt him."

Cecilia instantly rang the bell, and ordered tea.

"Well now," said he, "remember the sin of this breach of appointment lies wholly at your door. I shall tell him you laid violent hands on me; and if that is not enough to excuse me, I shall desire he will try whether he could be more of a stoic with you himself."

"I think I must *un*order the tea," said she, with what gaiety she could assume, "if I am to be responsible for any mischief from your drinking it."

"No, no, you sha'nt be off now; but pray would it be quite out of rule for you to send and ask him to come to us?"

"Why

"Why I believe—I think—" said she, stammering, "it's very likely he may be engaged."

"Well, well, I don't mean to propose any violent incongruity. You must excuse my blundering; I understand but little of the *etiquette* of young ladies. 'Tis a science too intricate to be learned without more study than we plodding men of business can well spare time for. However, when I have done *writing* prescriptions, I will set about *reading* them, provided you will be my instructress."

Cecilia, though ashamed of a charge in which prudery and affectation were implied, was compelled to submit to it, as either to send for Delvile, or explain her objections, was equally impossible. The Miss Charltons, therefore, joined them, and they went to tea.

Just as they had done, a note was delivered to Dr. Lyster; "See here," cried he, when he had read it, "what a fine thing it is to be a *young* man! Why now, Mr. Mortimer understands as much of all this *etiquette* as you ladies do yourselves; for he only writes a note even to ask how his mother does."

He then put it into Cecilia's hand.

To Dr. Lyster.

"TELL me, my dear Sir, how you have found my mother? I am uneasy at your long stay,

ſtay, and engaged with my friend Biddulph, or I ſhould have followed you in perſon.

M, D.

" So you ſee," continued the doctor, " I need not do pennance for engaging myſelf to *you*, when this young gentleman can find ſuch good entertainment for himſelf."

Cecilia, who well knew the honourable motive of Delvile's engagement, with difficulty forbore ſpeaking in his vindication. Dr. Lyſter immediately began an anſwer, but before he had finiſhed it, called out, " Now as I am told you are a very good young woman, I think you can do no leſs than aſſiſt me to puniſh this gay ſpark, for playing the *macaroni*, when he ought to viſit his ſick mother."

Cecilia, much hurt for Delvile, and much confuſed for herſelf, looked abaſhed, but knew not what to anſwer.

" My ſcheme," continued the doctor, " is to tell him, that as he has found one engagement for tea, he may find another for ſupper; but that as to me, I am better diſpoſed of, for you inſiſt upon keeping me to yourſelf. Come, what ſays *etiquette?* may I treat myſelf with this puff?"

" Certainly," ſaid Cecilia, endeavouring to look pleaſed, " if you will favour us with your company, Miſs Charltons and myſelf will think the *puffing* ſhould rather be ours than yours."

" That

"That then," said the doctor, "will not answer my purpose, for I mean the puff to be my own, or how do I punish him? So, suppose I tell him I shall not only sup with three young ladies, but be invited to a tête-à-tête with one of them into the bargain?"

The young ladies only laughed, and the doctor finished his note, and sent it away; and then, turning gaily to Cecilia, "Come," he said, "why don't you give me this invitation? surely you don't mean to make me guilty of perjury?"

Cecilia, but little disposed for pleasantry, would gladly now have dropped the subject; but Dr. Lyster, turning to the Miss Charltons, said, "Young ladies, I call you both to witness if this is not very bad usage: this young woman has connived at my writing a downright falsehood, and all the time took me in to believe it was a truth. The only way I can think of to cure her of such frolics, is for both of you to leave us together, and so make her keep her word whether she will or no."

The Miss Charltons took the hint, and went away; while Cecilia, who had not at all suspected he meant seriously to speak with her, remained extremely perplexed to think what he had to say.

"Mrs. Delvile," cried he, continuing the same air of easy good humour, "though I allowed her not to speak to me above twenty words, took up near ten of them to tell me

that

that you had behaved to her like an angel. Why so she ought, cried I; what else was she sent for here to look so like one? I charged her, therefore, to take all that as a thing of course: and to prove that I really think what I say, I am now going to make a trial of you; that, if you are any thing less, will induce you to order some of your men to drive me into the street. The truth is, I have had a little commission given me, which in the first place I know not how to introduce, and which, in the second, as far as I can judge, appears to be absolutely superfluous."

Cecilia now felt uneasy and alarmed, and begged him to explain himself. He then dropped the levity with which he had begun the discourse, and after a grave, yet gentle preparation, expressive of his unwillingness to distress her, and his firm persuasion of her uncommon worthiness, he acquainted her that he was no stranger to her situation with respect to the Delvile family.

"Good God!" cried she, blushing and much amazed; "and who—"

"I knew it," said he, "from the moment I attended Mr. Mortimer in his illness at Delvile Castle. He could not conceal from me that the seat of his disorder was his mind; and I could not know that, without readily conjecturing the cause, when I saw who was his father's guest, and when I knew what was his father's character. He found he was betrayed

to

to me, and upon my advising a journey, he understood me properly. His openness to counsel, and the manly firmness with which he behaved in quitting you, made me hope the danger was blown over. But last week, when I was at the Castle, where I have for some time attended Mr. Delvile; who has had a severe fit of the gout, I found him in an agitation of spirits that made me apprehend it would be thrown into his stomach. I desired Mrs. Delvile to use her influence to calm him; but she was herself in still greater emotion, and acquainting me she was obliged to leave him, desired I would spend with him every moment in my power. I have therefore almost lived at the Castle during her absence, and, in the course of our many conversations, he has acknowledged to me the uneasiness under which he laboured, from the intelligence concerning his son, which he had just received."

Cecilia wished here to enquire *how* received, and from whom, but had not the courage, and therefore he proceeded.

"I was still with the father when Mr. Mortimer arrived post at my house to fetch me hither. I was sent for home; he informed me of his errand without disguise, for he knew I was well acquainted with the original secret whence all the evil arose. I told him my distress in what manner to leave his father; and he was extremely shocked himself when acquainted with his situation. We agreed that

it

it would be vain to conceal from him the indisposition of Mrs. Delvile, which the delay of her return, and a thousand other accidents, might in some unfortunate way make known to him. He commissioned me, therefore, to break it to him, that he might consent to my journey, and at the same time to quiet his own mind, by assuring him all he had apprehended was wholly at an end."

He stopt, and looked to see how Cecilia bore these words.

"It *is* all at an end, Sir;" said she, with firmness; "but I have not yet heard your commission; what, and from whom is that?"

"I am thoroughly satisfied it is unnecessary;" he answered, "since the young man can but submit, and you can but give him up."

"But still, if there is a message, it is fit I should hear it."

"If you choose it, so it is. I told Mr. Delvile whither I was coming, and I repeated to him his son's assurances. He was relieved, but not satisfied; he would not see him, and gave me for him a prohibition of extreme severity,—and to *you* he bid me say—"

"From *him*, then, is my message?" cried Cecilia, half frightened, and much disappointed.

"Yes,"

"Yes," said he, understanding her immediately, "for the son, after giving me his first account, had the wisdom and forbearance not once to mention you."

"I am very glad," said she, with a mixture of admiration and regret, "to hear it. But what, Sir, said Mr. Delvile?"

"He bid me tell you that either *he*, or *you* must see his son never more."

"It was indeed unnecessary," cried she, colouring with resentment, "to send me such a message. I meant not to see him again, he meant not to desire it. I return him, however, no answer, and I will make him no promise; to Mrs. Delvile alone I hold myself bound; to him, send what messages he may, I shall always hold myself free. But believe me, Dr. Lyster, if with his name, his son had inherited his character, his desire of our separation would be feeble, and trifling, compared with my own!"

"I am sorry, my good young lady," said he, "to have given you this disturbance; yet I admire your spirit, and doubt not but it will enable you to forget any little disappointment you may have suffered. And what, after all, have you to regret? Mortimer Delvile is, indeed, a young man that any woman might wish to attach; but every woman cannot have him, and you, of all women, have least reason to repine in missing him.

Y "

him, for certainly is there another man you may not choose or reject at your pleasure."

Little as was the consolation Cecilia could draw from this speech, she was too sensible to become not her situation to make complaints, and therefore, to end the conversation, she proposed calling in the Miss Charltons.

"No, no," said he, "I must step up again to Mrs. Delvile, and then be gone. To-morrow morning I shall but call to see how she is, and leave some directions, and set off. Mr. Mortimer Delvile accompanies me back: but he means to return hither in a week, in order to travel with his mother to Bristol. Mean time, I purpose to bring about a reconciliation between him and his father, whose prejudices are more intractable than any man's I ever met with."

"It will be strange indeed," said Cecilia, "should a reconciliation *now* be difficult!"

"True; but it is long since he was young himself, and the softer affections he never was acquainted with, and only regards them in his son as derogatory to his whole race. However, if there were not some few such men, there would hardly be a family in the kingdom that could count a great grand-father. I am not, I must own, of his humour myself, but I think it rather peculiarly stranger, than peculiarly worse than most other people's; and how, for example, was that of *your* uncle a whit the better? He was just as

fond

fond of his name, as if, like Mr. Delvile, he could trace it from the time of the Saxons."

Cecilia strongly felt the truth of this observation, but not choosing to discuss it, made not any answer, and Dr. Lyster, after a few good natured apologies, both for his friends, the Delviles, and himself, went up stairs.

"What continual disturbance," cried she, when left alone, "keeps me thus for ever from rest! no sooner is one wound closed, but another is opened; mortification constantly succeeds distress, and when my heart is spared my pride is attacked, that not a moment of tranquillity may ever be allowed me! Had the lowest of women won the affections of Mr. Delvile, could his father with less delicacy or less decency have acquainted her with his inflexible disapprobation? To send with so little ceremony a message so contemptuous and so peremptory!—but perhaps it is better, for had he, too, like Mrs. Delvile, joined kindness with rejection, I might still more keenly have felt the perverseness of my destiny.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

A PARTING.

THE next morning Dr. Lyſter called early, and having viſited Mrs. Delvile, and again met the two gentlemen of the faculty in whoſe care ſhe was to remain, he took his leave. But not without contriving firſt to ſpeak a few words to Cecilia in private, in which he charged her to be careful of her health, and re-animate her ſpirits. "Don't ſuppoſe," ſaid he, "that becauſe I am a friend of the Delvile family, I am either blind to your merits, or to their foibles, far from it; but then why ſhould they interfere with one another? Let them keep their prejudices, which, though different, are not worſe than their neighbours, and do you retain your excellencies, and draw from them the happineſs which they ought to give you. People reaſon and refine themſelves into a thouſand miſeries, by chooſing to ſettle that they can only be contented one way; whereas, there are fifty ways, if they would but look about them, that would commonly do as well."

"I believe, indeed, you are right," anſwered Cecilia, "and I thank you for the admonition; I will do what I can towards ſtudying

ſtudying your ſcheme of philoſophy, and it is always one ſtep to amendment, to be convinced that we want it."

"You are a ſenſible and charming girl," ſaid Dr. Lyſter, "and Mr. Delvile, ſhould he find a daughter-in-law deſcended in a right line from Egbert, firſt king of all England, won't be ſo well off as if he had ſatisfied himſelf with you. However, the old gentleman has a fair right, after all, to be pleaſed his own way, and let us blame him how we will, we ſhall find, upon ſifting, it is for no other reaſon but becauſe his humour happens to claſh with our own."

"That, indeed," ſaid Cecilia, ſmiling, "is a truth incontrovertable! and a truth to which, for the future, I will endeavour to give more weight. But will you permit me now to aſk one queſtion?—Can you tell me from whom, how, or when the intelligence which has cauſed all this diſturbance——"

She heſitated; but, comprehending her readily, he anſwered, "How they got at it, I never heard, for I never thought it worth while to enquire, as it is ſo generally known, that nobody I meet with ſeems ignorant of it."

This was another, and a cruel ſhock to Cecilia, and Dr. Lyſter, perceiving it, again attempted to comfort her. "That the affair is ſomewhat ſpread," ſaid he, "is now not to be helped, and therefore little worth

thinking of; every body will agree that the choice of both does honour to both, and nobody need be ashamed to be successor to either, whenever the course of things leads Mr. Mortimer and yourself to make another [redacted]. He wisely intends to go abroad, and will not return till he is his own man again. And as to you, my good young lady, what, after a short time given to vexation, need interrupt your happiness? You have the whole world before you, with youth, fortune, talents, beauty, and independence; drive, therefore, from your head this unlucky affair, and remember there can hardly be a family in the kingdom, this one excepted, that will not rejoice in a connection with you."

He then good-humouredly shook hands with her, and went into his chaise.

Cecilia, though not slow in remarking the ease and philosophy with which every one can argue upon the calamities, and moralize upon the misconduct of others, had still the candour and good sense to see that there was reason in what he urged, and to resolve upon making the best use in her power of the hints for consolation she might draw from his discourse.

During the following week, she devoted herself almost wholly to Mrs. Delvile, sharing with the maid, whom she had brought with her from the Castle, the fatigue of nursing

nursing her, and leaving to the Miss Charlestons the chief care of their grand-mother. For Mrs. Delvile appeared every hour more sensible of her attention, and more desirous of her presence, and though neither of them spoke, each was endeared to the other by the tender offices of friendship which were paid and received.

When this week was expired, Dr. Lyster was prevailed upon to return again to Bury, in order to travel himself with Mrs. Delvile to Bristol. "Well," cried he, taking Cecilia by the first opportunity aside, "how are you? Have you studied my scheme of philosophy, as you promised me?"

"O yes," said she, "and made, I flatter myself, no little proficiency."

"You are a good girl," cried he, "a very extraordinary girl! I am sure you are; and upon my honour I pity poor Mortimer with all my soul! But he is a noble young fellow, and behaves with a courage and spirit that does me good to behold. To have obtained you, he would have moved heaven and earth, but finding you out of his reach, he submits to his fate like a man."

Cecilia's eyes glistened at this speech; "Yes," said she, "he long since said 'tis suspense, 'tis hope, that make the misery of life,—for there the passions have all power, and reason has none. But when evils are irremediable, and we have neither resources to

plan, nor castle-building to delude us, we find time for the cultivation of philosophy, and flatter ourselves, perhaps, that we have found inclination!"

"Why you have considered this matter very deeply," said he; "but I must not have you give way to these serious reflections. Thought, after all, has a cruel spite against happiness; I would have you, therefore, keep as much as you conveniently can, out of its company. Run about and divert yourself, 'tis all you have for it. The true art of happiness, in this most whimsical world, seems nothing more nor less than this.—Let those who have leisure, find employment, and those who have business find leisure."

He then told her that Mr. Delvile senior was much better, and no longer confined to his room: and that he had had the pleasure of seeing an entire reconciliation take place between him and his son, of whom he was more fond and more proud than any other father in the universe.

"Think of him, however, my dear young lady," he continued, "no more, for the matter I see is desperate: you must pardon my being a little officious, when I confess to you I could not help proposing to the old gentleman an expedient of my own; for as I could not drive you out of my head, I employed myself in thinking what might be done by way of accommodation. Now my scheme

was

was really a very good one, only when people are prejudiced, all reasoning is thrown away upon them. I proposed sinking *both* your names, since they are so at variance with one another, and so adopting a third, by means of a title. But Mr. Delvile angrily declared, that though such a scheme might do very well for the needy Lord Ernolf, a Peer of twenty years, his own noble ancestors should never, by his consent, forfeit a name which so many centuries had rendered honourable. His son Mortimer, he added, must inevitably inherit the title of his grandfather, his uncle being old and unmarried; but yet he would rather see him a beggar, than lose his dearest hope that *Delvile*, Lord *Delvile*, would descend, both name and title, from generation to generation unsullied and uninterrupted."

"I am sorry, indeed," said Cecilia, "that such a proposal was made, and I earnestly entreat that none of any sort may be repeated."

"Well, well," said he, "I would not for the world do any mischief, but who would not have supposed such a proposal would have done good?"

"Mr. Mortimer," he then added, "is to meet us at —— for he would not, he said, come again to this place, upon such terms as he was here last week, for the whole worth of the king's dominions."

The carriage was now
Delvile was prepared to de
proached to take leave of h
following, said, "No talki
no compliments of any sort
my patient without perm
speech, and for all the ruc
guilty of, I am willing to b

Cecilia would then ha
Mrs. Delvile, holding out
said, "To every thing else,
content to submit; but were
tering the words, I cannot l
able creature without first
I love her, how I honour,
her! without entreating he
her health, and conjuring
the greatness of her conduc
her spirits to sink from the
virtue. And now, my l
you!"

She then embraced her,
cilia, at a motion of Dr. L
to follow her.

"And thus," cried she,
gone, "thus ends all my
this family! which it seems
have known for the purpo
new proof of the insufficien
constitute happiness." "Wh
mine as the perfection of h
And so, perhaps, it is, for i

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licity and humanity are never permitted to come nearer."

And thus, in philoſophic ſadneſs, by reaſoning upon the univerſality of miſery, ſhe reſtrained, at leaſt, all violence of ſorrow, though her ſpirits were dejected, and her heart was heavy.

But the next day brought with it ſome comfort that a little lightened her ſadneſs; Mrs. Charlton, almoſt wholly recovered, was able to go down ſtairs, and Cecilia had at leaſt the ſatisfaction of ſeeing an happy concluſion to an illneſs of which, with the utmoſt concern and regret, ſhe conſidered herſelf as the cauſe. She attended her with the moſt unremitting aſſiduity, and being really very thankful, endeavoured to appear happy, and flattered herſelf that, by continual effort, the appearance in a ſhort time would become reality.

Mrs. Charlton retired early, and Cecilia accompanied her up ſtairs: and while ſhe was with her, was informed that Mr. Monckton was in the parlour.

The various, afflicting, and uncommon ſcenes in which ſhe had been engaged ſince ſhe laſt ſaw him, had almoſt wholly driven him from her remembrance, or when at any time he recurred to it, it was only to attribute the diſcontinuance of his viſits to the offence ſhe had given him, in refuſing to

follow his advice by relinquishing his London expedition.

Full, therefore, of the mortifying transactions which had passed since their parting, and fearful of his enquiries into disgraces he had nearly foretold, she heard him announced with chagrin, and waited upon him in the most painful confusion.

Far different were the feelings of Mrs. Monckton; he read in her countenance the dejection of disappointment, which impressed upon his heart the vivacity of hope: her evident shame was to him secret triumph; her ill-concealed sorrow revived all his expectations.

She hastily began a conversation by mentioning her debt to him, and apologising for not paying it the moment she was of age. He knew but too well how her time had been occupied, and assured her the delay was wholly immaterial.

He then led to an enquiry into the present situation of her affairs; but unable to endure a disquisition, which could only be productive of censure and mortification, she hastily stopt it, exclaiming, "Ask me not, I entreat you, Sir, any detail of what has passed,——the event has brought me sufferings that may well make blame dispensed with;—I acknowledge all your wisdom, I am sensible of my own error, but the affair

is

is wholly dropt, and the unhappy connection I was forming is broken off for ever!"

Little now was Mr. Monckton's effort in repressing his farther curiosity, and he started other subjects with readiness, gaiety and address. He mentioned Mrs. Charlton, for whom he had not the smallest regard; he talked to her of Mrs. Harrel, whose very existence was indifferent to him; and he spoke of their common acquaintance in the country, for not one of whom he would have grieved, if assured of meeting no more. His powers of conversation were enlivened by his hopes, and his exhilarated spirits made all subjects seem happy to him. A weight was removed from his mind which had nearly borne down even his remotest hopes; the object of his eager pursuit seemed still within his reach, and the rival into whose power he had so lately almost beheld her delivered, was totally renounced, and no longer to be dreaded. A revolution such as this, raised expectations more sanguine than ever; and in quitting the house, he exultingly considered himself released from every obstacle to his views —till, just as he arrived home, he recollected his wife!

CHAP. V.

A TALE.

A WEEK passed, during which Cecilia, however sad, spent her time as usual with the family, denying to herself all voluntary indulgence of grief, and forbearing to seek consolation from solitude, or relief from tears. She never named Delvile, she begged Mrs. Charlton never to mention him; she called to her aid the account she had received from Dr. Lyster of his firmness, and endeavoured, by an emulous ambition, to fortify her mind from the weakness of depression and regret.

This week, a week of struggle with all her feelings, was just elapsed, when she received by the post the following letter from Mrs. Delvile.

To Miss BEVERLEY.

Bristol, Oct. 31.

MY sweet young friend will not, I hope, be sorry to hear of my safe arrival at this place: to me every account of her health and welfare, will ever be the intelligence I shall most

most covet to receive. Yet I mean not to ask for it in return; to chance I will trust for information, and I only write now to say I shall write no more.

Too much for thanks is what I owe you, and what I think of you is beyond all power of expression. Do not, then, wish me ill, ill as I have seemed to merit of you, for my own heart is almost broken by the tyranny I have been compelled to practise upon yours.

And now let me bid a long adieu to you, my admirable Cecilia; you shall not be tormented with a useless correspondence, which can only awaken painful recollections, or give rise to yet more painful new anxieties. Fervently will I pray for the restoration of your happiness, to which nothing can so greatly contribute as that wise, that uniform command, so feminine, yet so dignified, you maintain over your passions; which often I have admired, though never so feelingly as at this conscious moment! when my own health is the sacrifice of emotions most fatally unrestrained.

Send to me no answer, even if you have the sweetness to wish it; every new proof of the generosity of your nature is to me but a new wound. Forget us, therefore, wholly,—alas! you have only known us for sorrow!—forget us, dear and invaluable Cecilia! though ever, as you have nobly deserved, must you be fondly and gratefully remembered by

AUGUSTA DELVILE.

The attempted philosophy, and laboured resignation of Cecilia, this letter destroyed: the struggle was over; the apathy was at an end, and she burst into an agony of tears, which finding the vent they had long sought, now flowed unchecked down her cheeks, sad monitors of the weakness of reason opposed to the anguish of sorrow!

A letter at once so caressing, yet so absolute, forced its way to her heart, in spite of the fortitude she had flattered herself was its guard. In giving up Delville she was satisfied of the propriety of seeing him no more, and convinced that even to talk of him would be folly and imprudence; but to be told that for the future they must remain strangers to the existence of each other—there seemed in this a hardship, a rigour, that was insupportable.

"Oh, what," cried she, "is human nature! in its best state how imperfect! that a woman such as this, so noble in character, so elevated in sentiment, with heroism to sacrifice to her sense of duty the happiness of a son, whom with joy she would die to serve, can herself be thus governed by prejudice, thus enslaved, thus subdued by opinion!" Yet never, even when miserable, unjust or irrational; her grief was unmixed with anger, and her tears streamed not from resentment, but affliction. The situation of Mrs. Delville, however different, she considered to be as wretched as her own. She read, therefore,

with

with sadness, but not bitterness, her farewel, and received not, with disdain, but with gratitude, her sympathy. Yet, though her indignation was not irritated, her sufferings were doubled, by a farewel so kind, yet so despotic; a sympathy so affectionate, yet so hopeless.

In this first indulgence of grief which she had granted to her disappointment, she was soon interrupted by a summons down stairs to a gentleman.

Unfit and unwilling to be seen, she begged that he might leave his name, and appoint a time for calling again.

Her maid brought for answer, that he believed his name was unknown to her, and desired to see her now, unless she was employed in some matter of moment.

She then put up her letter, and went into the parlour; and there, to her infinite amazement, beheld Mr. Albany.

"How little, Sir," she cried, "did I expect this pleasure."

"This pleasure," repeated he, "do you call it?—what strange abuse of words! what causeless trifling with honesty! is language of no purpose but to wound the ear with untruths? Is the gift of speech only granted us to pervert the use of understanding? I can give you no pleasure, I have no power to give it any one; you can give none to me—the whole world could not invest you with the means."

"Well,

"Well, Sir," faid Cecilia, who had little ſpirit to defend herſelf, "I will not vindicate the expreſſion, but of this I will unfeignedly aſſure you, I am at leaſt as glad to ſee you juſt now, as I ſhould be to ſee any body."

"Your eyes," cried he, "are red, your voice is inarticulate;—young, rich, and attractive, the world at your feet; that world yet untried, and its falſehood unknown, how have you thus found means to anticipate miſery? which way have you uncovered the cauldron of human woes? Fatal and early anticipation! that cover once removed, can never be replaced; thoſe woes, thoſe boiling woes, will pour out upon you continually, and only when your heart ceaſes to beat, will their ebullition ceaſe to torture you!"

"Alas!" cried Cecilia, ſhuddering, "how cruel, yet how true!"

"Why went you," cried he, "to the cauldron? it came not to you. Miſery ſeeks not man, but man miſery. He walks out in the ſun; but ſtops not for a cloud; confident, he purſues his way, till the ſtorm, which, gathering, he might have avoided, burſt over his devoted head. Scared and amazed, he repents his temerity; he calls, but it is then too late! he runs, but it is thunder which follows him! Such is the preſumption of man, ſuch at once is the arrogance and ſhallowneſs of his nature! And thou, ſimple and blind! haſt thou, too, followed whither fancy has led thee, unheeding

that thy career was too vehement for tranquillity, nor missing that lovely companion of youth's early innocence, till, adventurous and embarking, thou hast lost her for ever!"

In the present weak state of Cecilia's spirits, this attack was too much for her; and the tears she had just, and with difficulty restrained, again forced their way down her cheeks, as she answered, "It is but too true,—I have lost her for ever!"

"Poor thing," said he, while the rigour of his countenance was softened into the gentlest commiseration, "so young!—looking, too, so innocent!—'tis hard—And is nothing left thee? no small remaining hope, to cheat, humanely cheat thy yet not wholly extinguished credulity?"

Cecilia wept without answering.

"Let me not," said he, "waste my compassion upon nothing; compassion is with me no effusion of affectation; tell me, then, if thou deservest it, or if thy misfortunes are imaginary, and thy grief is factitious?"

"Factitious," repeated she, "Good heaven!"

"Answer me, then, these questions, in which I shall comprise the only calamities for which sorrow has no controul, or none from human motives. Tell me, then, have you lost by death the friend of your bosom?"

"No!"

"Is

"Is your fortune diſſipated by extravagance, and your power of relieving the diſtreſſed at an end?"

"No; the power and the will are, I hope, equally undiminiſhed."

"O, then, unhappy girl! have you been guilty of ſome vice, and hangs remorſe thus heavy on your conſcience?"

"No, no; thank heaven, to that miſery at leaſt, I am a ſtranger!"

His countenance now again reſumed its ſeverity, and, in the ſterneſt manner, "Whence then," he ſaid, "theſe tears? and what is this caprice you dignify with the name of ſorrow? —ſtrange wantonneſs of indolence and luxury! perverſe repining of ungrateful plenitude! —oh hadſt thou known what I have ſuffered!—"

"Could I leſſen what you have ſuffered," ſaid Cecilia, "I ſhould ſincerely rejoice; but heavy indeed muſt be your affliction, of mine in its compariſon deſerves to be ſtyled caprice!"

"Caprice!" repeated he, "'tis joy! 'tis extacy compared with mine!—Thou haſt not in licentiouſneſs waſted thy inheritance! thou haſt not by remorſe barred each avenue to enjoyment! nor yet has the cold grave ſolved the beloved of thy ſoul!"

"Neither," ſaid Cecilia, "I hope, are the evils you have yourſelf ſuſtained ſo irremediable?"

"Yes,

"Yes, I have borne them all!—*have* borne, I bear them still; I shall bear them while I breathe! I may rue them, perhaps, yet longer."

"Good God!" cried Cecilia, shrinking, "what a world is this! how full of woe and wickedness!"

"Yet thou, too, canst complain," cried he, "though happy in life's only blessing, Innocence! thou, too, canst murmur, though stranger to death's only terror, Sin! O yet, if thy sorrow is unpolluted with guilt, be regardless of all else, and rejoice in thy destiny!"

"But who," cried she, deeply sighing, "shall teach me such a lesson of joy, when all within rises to oppose it?"

"I," cried he, "will teach it thee, for I will tell thee my own sad story. Then wilt thou find how much happier is thy lot, then wilt thou raise thy head in thankful triumph."

"O, no! triumph comes not so lightly!—yet if you will venture to trust me with some account of yourself, I shall be glad to hear it, and much obliged by the communication."

"I will," he answered, "whatever I may suffer: to awaken thee from this dream of fancied sorrow, I will open all my wounds, and thou shalt probe them with fresh shame."

"No, indeed," cried Cecilia with quickness, "I will not hear you, if the relation will be so painful."

"Upon

"Upon *me* this humanity is loſt," ſaid he, "ſince puniſhment and penitence alone give me comfort. I will tell, thee, therefore, my crimes, that thou mayeſt know thy own felicity, leſt, ignorant it means nothing but innocence, thou ſhouldſt loſe it, unconſcious of its value. Liſten then to me, and learn what miſery is! Guilt is alone the baſis of laſting unhappineſs; guilt is the baſis of mine, and therefore I am a wretch for-ever!"

Cecilia would have again declined hearing him, but he refuſed to be ſpared; and as her curioſity had long been excited to know ſomething of his hiſtory, and the motives of his extraordinary conduct, ſhe was glad to have it ſatisfied, and gave him the utmoſt attention.

"I will not ſpeak to you of my family," ſaid he; "hiſtorical accuracy would little anſwer to either of us. I am a native of the Weſt Indies, and I was early ſent hither to be educated. While I was yet at the Univerſity, I ſaw, I adored, and I purſued the faireſt flower that ever put forth its ſweet buds, the ſofteſt heart that ever was broken by ill uſage! She was poor and unprotected, the daughter of a villager; ſhe was untaught and unpretending, the child of ſimplicity! But fifteen ſummers had ſhe bloomed, and her heart was an eaſy conqueſt; yet, once made mine, it reſiſted all allurement to infidelity. My fellow ſtudents attacked her; ſhe was aſſaulted by all the arts of ſeduction; flattery, bribery, ſuppli-

supplication, all were employed, yet all failed; she was wholly my own; and with sincerity so attractive, I determined to marry her in defiance of all worldly objections.

"The sudden death of my father called me hastily to Jamaica; I feared leaving this treasure unguarded, yet in decency could neither marry nor take her directly; I pledged my faith, therefore, to return to her, as soon as I had settled my affairs, and I left to a bosom friend the inspection of her conduct in my absence.

"To leave her was madness,—to trust in man was madness.—O, hateful race! how has the world been abhorrent to me since that time! I have loathed the light of the sun, I have shrunk from the commerce of my fellow-creatures; the voice of man I have detested, his sight I have abominated!—but oh, more than all should I be abominated myself!

"When I came to my fortune, intoxicated with sudden power, I forgot this fair blossom, I revelled in licentiousness and vice, and left it exposed and forlorn. Riot succeeded riot, till a fever, incurred by my own intemperance, first gave me time to think. Then was she revenged, for then first remorse was my portion: her image was brought back to my mind with frantic fondness, and bitterest contrition. The moment I recovered, I returned to England; I flew to claim her,—but she was lost! no one knew whither she

was

was gone; the wretch I had trusted pretended to know least of all, yet, after a furious search, I traced her to a cottage, where he had concealed her himself!

"When she saw me, she screamed and would have flown; I stopt her, and told her I came faithfully and honourably to make her my wife:—her own faith and honour, though sullied, were not extinguished, for she instantly acknowledged the fatal tale of her undoing!

"Did I recompense this ingenuousness? this unexampled, this beautiful sacrifice to intuitive integrity! Yes, with my curses!—I loaded her with execrations, I reviled her in language the most opprobrious, I insulted her even for her confession! I invoked all evil upon her from the bottom of my heart!—She knelt at my feet, she implored my forgiveness and compassion, she wept with the bitterness of despair,—and yet I spurned her from me! —Spurned?—let me not hide my shame! I barbarously struck her!—— nor single was the blow!—it was doubled, it was reiterated! —Oh wretch, unyielding and unpitying!— where shall hereafter be clemency for thee! —So fair a form! so young a culprit! so infamously seduced! so humbly penitent!

"In this miserable condition, helpless and deplorable, mangled by these savage hands, and reviled by this inhuman tongue, I left her, in search of the villain who had destroyed her: but, cowardly as treacherous, he had absconded.

abſconded. Repenting my fury, I haſtened to her again; the fierceneſs of my cruelty ſhamed me when I grew calmer, the ſoftneſs of her ſorrow melted me upon recollection: I returned, therefore, to ſoothe her, — but again ſhe was gone! terrified with expectation of inſult, ſhe hid herſelf from all my enquiries. I wandered in ſearch of her two long years to no purpoſe, regardleſs of my affairs, and of all things but that purſuit —— At length, I thought I ſaw her—in London, alone, and walking in the ſtreets at midnight.——I fearfully followed her,—and followed her into an houſe of infamy!

The wretches by whom ſhe was ſurrounded were noiſy and drinking, they heeded me little,—but ſhe ſaw and knew me at once!—She did not ſpeak, nor did I — but in two moments ſhe fainted, and fell.

Yet did I not help her; the people took their own meaſures to recover her, and when ſhe was again able to ſtand, would have removed her to another apartment.

I then went forward, and forcing them away from her with all the ſtrength of deſperation, I turned to the unhappy ſinner, who to chance only ſeemed to leave what became of her, and cried, From this ſcene of vice and horror let me yet reſcue you! you look ſtill unfit for ſuch ſociety, truſt yourſelf, therefore, to me. I ſeized her hand, I drew, I almoſt dragged her away. She trembled, ſhe could

ſcarce

ſcarce totter, but neither conſented nor refuſed, neither ſhed a tear, nor ſpoke a word, and her countenance preſented a picture of affright, amazement, and horror.

"I took her to a houſe in the country, each of us ſilent the whole way. I gave her an apartment, and a female attendant, and ordered for her every convenience I could ſuggeſt. I ſtaid myſelf in the ſame houſe, but diſtracted with remorſe for the guilt and ruin into which I had terrified her, I could not bear her ſight.

"In a few days her maid aſſured me the life ſhe led muſt deſtroy her; that ſhe would taſte nothing but bread and water, never ſpoke, and never ſlept.

"Alarmed by this account, I flew into her apartment; pride and reſentment gave way to pity and fondneſs, and I beſought her to take comfort. I ſpoke, however, to a ſtatue, ſhe replied not, nor ſeemed to hear me. I then humbled myſelf to her as in the days of her innocence and firſt power, ſupplicating her notice, entreating even her commiſeration! all was to no purpoſe; ſhe neither received nor repulſed me, and was alike inattentive to exhortation and to prayer.

"Whole hours did I ſpend at her feet, vowing never to ariſe till ſhe ſpoke to me,—all, all, in vain! ſhe ſeemed deaf, mute, inſenſible; her face unmoved, a ſettled deſpair fixed in her eyes,—thoſe eyes that had never looked

at

stone but with dove-like softness and compliance!—She sat constantly in one chair, she never changed her dress, no persuasions could prevail with her to lie down, and at meals she just swallowed so much dry bread as might save her from dying for want of food.

"What was the distraction of my soul, to find her bent upon this course to her last hour!—quick came that hour, but never will it be forgotten! rapidly it was gone, but eternally it will be remembered!

"When she felt herself expiring, she acknowledged she had made a vow, upon entering the house, to live speechless and motionless, as a penance for her offences!

"I kept her loved corpse till my own senses failed me,—it was then only torn from me,—and I have lost all recollection of three years of my existence!"

Cecilia shuddered at this hint, yet was not surprised by it; Mr. Gosport had acquainted her he had been formerly confined; and his flightiness, wildness, florid language, and extraordinary way of life, had long led her to suspect his reason had been impaired.

"The scene to which my memory first leads me back," he continued, "is visiting her grave; solemnly upon it I returned her vow, though not by one of equal severity. To her poor remains did I pledge myself, that the day should never pass in which I would receive nourishment, nor the night come in

which

which I would take reſt, till I had done, or zealouſly attempted to do, ſome ſervice to a fellow-creature.

"For this purpoſe have I wandered from city to city, from the town to the country, and from the rich to the poor. I go into every houſe where I can gain admittance, I admoniſh all who will hear me, I ſhame even thoſe who will not. I ſeek the Diſtreſſed wherever they are hid, I follow the Proſperous to beg a mite to ſerve them. I look for the Diſſipated in public, where, amidſt their licentiouſneſs, I check them; I purſue the Unhappy in private, where I counſel and endeavour to aſſiſt them. My own power is ſmall; my relations, during my ſufferings, limiting me to an annuity; but there is no one I ſcruple to ſolicit, and by zeal I ſupply ability.

"O, life of hardſhip and penance! laborious, toilſome, and reſtleſs! but I have merited no better, and I will not repine at it; I have vowed that I will endure it, and I will not be forſworn.

"One indulgence alone from time to time I allow myſelf,—'tis muſic! which has power to delight me even to rapture! it quiets all anxiety, it carries me out of myſelf, I forget through it every calamity, even the bittereſt anguiſh.

"Now then, that thou haſt heard me, tell me, haſt *thou* cauſe of ſorrow?"

"Alas,"

"Alas," cried Cecilia, "this indeed is a picture of misery to make my lot seem all happiness!"

"Art thou thus open to conviction?" cried he, mildly; "and dost thou not fly the voice of truth! for truth and reproof are one."

"No, I would rather seek it; I feel myself wretched, however inadequate may be the cause; I wish to be more resigned, and if you can instruct me how, I shall thankfully attend to you."

"Oh yet uncorrupted creature!" cried he, "with joy will I be thy monitor,—joy long untasted! Many have I wished to serve; all, hitherto, have rejected my offices; too honest to flatter them, they had not the fortitude to listen to me! too low to advance them, they had not the virtue to bear with me. You alone have I yet found pure enough not to fear inspection, and good enough to wish to be better. Yet words alone will not content me; I must also have deeds. Nor will your purse, however readily opened, suffice; you must give to me also your time and your thoughts; for money sent by others, to others only will afford relief; to lighten your own cares, you must distribute it yourself."

"You shall find me," said she, "a docile pupil, and most glad to be instructed how my existence may be useful."

"Happy then," cried he, "was the hour that brought me to this county; yet not in

search of you did I come, but of the mutable and ill-fated Belfield. Erring, yet ingenious young man! what a lesson to the vanity of talents, to the gaiety, the brilliancy of wit, is the sight of that green fallen plant! not sapless by age, nor withered by disease, but destroyed by want of pruning, and bending, breaking by its own luxuriance!"

"And where, Sir, is he now?"

"Labouring wilfully in the field, with those who labour compulsatorily; such are we all by nature, discontented, perverse, and changeable; though all have not courage to appear so, and few, like Belfield, are worth watching when they do. He told me he was happy; I knew it could not be: but his employment was inoffensive, and I left him without reproach. In this neighbourhood I heard of you, and found your name was coupled with praise. I came to see if you deserved it; I have seen, and am satisfied."

"You are not, then, very difficult, for I have yet done nothing. How are we to begin these operations you propose? You have awakened me by them to an expectation of pleasure, which nothing else, I believe, could just now have given me."

"We will work," cried he, "together, till not a woe shall remain upon your mind. The blessings of the fatherless, the prayers of little children, shall heal all your wounds with balm of sweetest fragrance. When sad, they

they ſhall cheer, when complaining, they ſhall ſoothe you. We will go to their roofleſs houſes, and ſee them repaired; we will exclude from their dwellings the inclemency of the weather; we will clothe them from cold, we will reſcue them from hunger. The cries of diſtreſs ſhall be changed to notes of joy: your heart ſhall be enraptured; mine, too, ſhall revive.—Oh, whither am I wandering? I am painting an Elyſium! and while I idly ſpeak, ſome fainting object dies for want of ſuccour! Farewel; I will fly to the abodes of wretchedneſs, and come to you to-morrow to render them the abodes of happineſs."

He then went away.

This ſingular viſit was for Cecilia moſt fortunately timed: it almoſt ſurpriſed her out of her peculiar grief, by the view which it opened to her of general calamity; wild, flighty, and imaginative as were his language and his counſels, their morality was ſtriking, and their benevolence was affecting. Taught by him to compare her ſtate with that of at leaſt half her ſpecies, ſhe began more candidly to weigh what was left with what was withdrawn, and found the balance in her favour. The plan he had preſented to her of good works was conſonant to her character and inclinations: and the active charity in which he propoſed to engage her, re-animated her fallen hopes, though to far different ſubjects from thoſe which had depreſſed them. Any ſcheme of worldly

happineſs would have ſickened and diſguſted her; but her mind was juſt in the ſituation to be impreſſed with elevated piety, and to adopt any deſign in which virtue humoured melancholy.

CHAP. VI.

A SHOCK.

CECILIA paſſed the reſt of the day in fanciful projects of beneficence; ſhe determined to wander with her romantic new ally whitherſoever he would lead her, and to ſpare neither fortune, time, nor trouble, in ſeeking and relieving the diſtreſſed. Not all her attempted philoſophy had calmed her mind like this plan; in merely refuſing indulgence to grief, ſhe had only locked it up in her heart, where eternally ſtruggling for vent, ſhe was almoſt overpowered by reſtraining it; but now her affliction had no longer her whole faculties to itſelf; the hope of doing good, the pleaſure of e ſing pain, the intention of devoting her time to the ſervice of the unhappy, once more delighted her imagination, that ſource of promiſſory enjoyment, which though often obſtructed, is never, in youth, exhauſted.

She

She would not give Mrs. Charlton the unneceſſary pain of hearing the letter with which ſhe had been ſo much affected, but ſhe told her of the viſit of Albany, and pleaſed her with the account of their ſcheme.

At night, with leſs ſadneſs than uſual, ſhe retired to reſt. In her ſleep ſhe beſtowed riches, and poured plenty upon the land; ſhe humbled the oppreſſor, ſhe exalted the oppreſſed; ſlaves were raiſed to dignities, captives reſtored to liberty; beggars ſaw ſmiling abundance, and wretchedneſs was baniſhed the world. From a cloud in which ſhe was ſupported by angels, Cecilia beheld theſe wonders, and while enjoying the glorious illuſion, ſhe was awakened by her maid, with news that Mrs. Charlton was dying!

She ſtarted up, and, undreſſed, was running to her apartment,—when the maid, calling to ſtop her, confeſſed ſhe was already dead!

She had made her exit in the night, but the time was not exactly known; her own maid, who ſlept in the room with her, going early to her bedſide to enquire how ſhe did, found her cold and motionleſs, and could only conclude that a paralytic ſtroke had taken her off.

Happily and in good time had Cecilia been ſomewhat recruited by one night of refreſhing ſlumbers and flattering dreams, for the ſhock ſhe now received promiſed her not ſoon another.

She loſt in Mrs. Charlton a friend, whom nearly from her infancy ſhe had conſidered as a mother, and by whom ſhe had been cheriſhed with tenderneſs almoſt unequalled. She was not a woman of bright parts, or much cultivation, but her heart was excellent, and her diſpoſition was amiable. Cecilia had known her longer than her memory could look back, though the earlieſt circumſtances ſhe could trace were kindneſſes received from her. Since ſhe had entered into life, and found the difficulty of the part ſhe had to act, to this worthy old lady alone had ſhe unboſomed her ſecret cares. Though little aſſiſted by her counſel, ſhe was always certain of her ſympathy; and while her own ſuperior judgment directed her conduct, ſhe had the relief of communicating her ſchemes, and weighing her perplexities, with a friend to whom nothing that concerned her was indifferent, and whoſe greateſt wiſh and chief pleaſure was the enjoyment of her converſation.

If left to herſelf, in the preſent period of her life, Mrs. Charlton had certainly not been the friend of her choice. The delicacy of her mind, and the refinement of her ideas, had now rendered her faſtidious, and ſhe would have looked out for elegancies and talents to which Mrs. Charlton had no pretenſions: but thoſe who live in the country have little power of ſelection; confined to a ſmall circle, they muſt be content with what it offers;

fers; and however they may idolize extraordinary merit when they meet with it, they must not regard it as essential to friendship, for in their circumscribed rotation, whatever may be their discontent, they can make but little change.

Such had been the situation to which Mrs. Charlton and Mrs. Harrel owed the friendship of Cecilia. Greatly their superior in understanding and intelligence, had the candidates for her favour been more numerous, the election had not fallen upon either of them. But she became known to both before discrimination made her difficult, and when her enlightened mind discerned their deficiencies, they had already an interest in their affections, which made her see them with lenity: and though sometimes, perhaps, conscious she should not have chosen them from many, she adhered to them with sincerity, and would have changed them for none.

Mrs. Harrel, however, too weak for similar sentiments, forgot her when out of sight, and by the time they met again, was insensible to every thing but shew and dissipation. Cecilia, shocked and surprised, first grieved from disappointed affection, and then lost that affection in angry contempt. But her fondness for Mrs. Charlton had never known abatement, as the kindness which had excited it had never known allay. She had loved her first from childish gratitude; but that love,

ſtrengthened and confirmed by confidential intercourſe, was now as ſincere and affectionate as if it had originated from ſympathetic admiration. Her loſs, therefore, was felt with the utmoſt ſeverity, and neither ſeeing nor knowing any means of replacing it, ſhe conſidered it as irreparable, and mourned it with bitterneſs.

When the firſt ſurpriſe of this cruel ſtroke was ſomewhat leſſened, ſhe ſent an expreſs to Mr. Monckton with the news, and entreated to ſee him immediately. He came without delay, and ſhe begged his counſel what ſtep ſhe ought herſelf to take in conſequence of this event. Her own houſe was ſtill unprepared for her; ſhe had of late neglected to haſten the workmen, and almoſt forgotten her intention of entering it. It was neceſſary, however, to change her abode immediately; ſhe was no longer in the houſe of Mrs. Charlton, but of her grand-daughters and co-heireſſes, each of whom ſhe diſliked, and upon neither of whom ſhe had any claim.

Mr. Monckton then, with the quickneſs of a man who utters a thought at the very moment of its projection, mentioned a ſcheme, upon which during his whole ride he had been ruminating; which was that ſhe would inſtantly remove to his houſe, and remain there till ſettled to her ſatisfaction.

Cecilia objected her little right of ſurpriſing Lady Margaret; but, without waiting to diſcuſs

cuſs it, leſt new objections ſhould ariſe, he quitted her, to fetch himſelf from her ladyſhip an invitation he meant to inſiſt upon her ſending.

Cecilia, though heartily diſliking this plan, knew not at preſent what better to adopt, and thought any thing preferable to going again to Mrs. Harrel, ſince that only could be done by feeding the anxiety of Mr. Arnott.

Mr. Monckton ſoon returned with a meſſage of his own fabrication; for his lady, though obliged to receive whom he pleaſed, took care to guard inviolate the independence of ſpeech, ſullenly perſevering in refuſing to ſay any thing, or perverſely ſaying only what he leaſt wiſhed to hear.

Cecilia then took a haſty leave of the Miſs Charltons, who, little affected by what they had loſt, and eager to examine what they had gained, parted from her gladly, and, with a heavy heart and weeping eyes, borrowed for the laſt time the carriage of her late worthy old friend, and for ever quitting her hoſpitable houſe, ſorrowfully ſet out for the Grove.

CHAP. VII.

A COGITATION.

LADY Margaret Monckton received Cecilia with the most gloomy coldness: she apologized for the liberty she had taken in making use of her ladyship's house, but, meeting no return of civility, she withdrew to the room which had been prepared for her, and resolved as much as possible to keep out of her sight.

It now became necessary without farther delay to settle her plan of life, and fix her place of residence. The forbidding looks of Lady Margaret made her hasten her resolves, which otherwise would for a while have given way to grief for her recent misfortune.

She sent for the surveyor who had the superintendance of her estates, to enquire how soon her own house would be fit for her reception; and heard there was yet work for near two months.

This answer made her very uncomfortable. To continue two months under the roof with Lady Margaret was a penance she could not enjoin herself, nor was she at all sure Lady Margaret would submit to it any better: she determined, therefore, to release herself from

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the conscious burthen of being an unwelcome visitor, by boarding with some creditable family at Bury, and devoting the two months in which she was to be kept from her house, to a general arrangement of her affairs, and a final settling with her guardians.

For these purposes it would be necessary she should go to London: but with whom, or in what manner, she could not decide. She desired, therefore, another conference with Mr. Monckton, who met her in the parlour.

She then communicated to him her schemes; and begged his counsel in her perplexities.

He was delighted at the application, and extremely well pleased with her design of boarding at Bury, well knowing he could then watch and visit her at his pleasure, and have far more comfort in her society than even in his own house, where all the vigilance with which he observed her was short of that with which he was himself observed by Lady Margaret. He endeavoured, however, to dissuade her from going to town, but her eagerness to pay the large sum she owed him, was now too great to be conquered. Of age, her fortune wholly in her power, and all attendance upon Mrs. Charlton at an end, she had no longer any excuse for having a debt in the world, and would suffer no persuasion to make her begin her career in life, with a negligence in settling her accounts which she

had so often censured in others. To go to London, therefore, she was fixed; and all that she desired was his advice concerning the journey.

He then told her, that in order to settle with her guardians, she must write to them in form, to demand an account of the sums that had been expended during her minority, and announce her intention for the future to take the management of her fortune into her own hands.

She immediately followed his directions, and consented to remain at the Grove till their answers arrived.

Being now, therefore, unavoidably fixed for some time at the house, she thought it proper and decent to attempt softening Lady Margaret in her favour. She exerted all her powers to please and to oblige her; but the exertion was necessarily vain, not only from the disposition, but the situation of her ladyship, since every effort made for this conciliatory purpose, rendered her doubly amiable in the eyes of her husband, and consequently to herself more odious than ever. Her jealousy, already but too well founded, received every hour the poisonous nourishment of fresh conviction, which so much soured and exasperated a temper naturally harsh, that her malignity and ill-humour grew daily more acrimonious. Nor would she have contented herself with displaying this irascibility by general

morose-

moroſeneſs, had not the ſame ſuſpicious watchfulneſs which diſcovered to her the paſſion of her huſband, ſerved equally to make manifeſt the indifference and innocence of Cecilia; to reproach her, therefore, ſhe had not any pretence, though her knowledge how much ſhe had to dread her, paſſed current in her mind for ſufficient reaſon to hate her. The Angry and the Violent uſe little diſcrimination;—whom they like, they enquire not if they approve; but whoever, no matter how unwittingly, ſtands in their way, they ſcruple not to ill uſe, and conclude they may laudably deteſt.

Cecilia, though much diſguſted, gave not over her attempt, which ſhe conſidered but as her due while ſhe continued in her houſe. Her general character, alſo, for peeviſhneſs and haughty ill-breeding, ſkilfully, from time to time, diſplayed, and artfully repined at by Mr. Monckton, ſtill kept her from ſuſpecting any peculiar animoſity to herſelf, and made her impute all that paſſed to the mere rancour of ill-humour. She confined herſelf, however, as much as poſſible, to her own apartment, where her ſorrow for Mrs. Charlton almoſt hourly increaſed, by the compariſon ſhe was forced upon making of her houſe with the Grove.

That worthy old lady left her grand-daughters her co-heireſſes and ſole executrixes. She bequeathed from them nothing conſiderable, though

though she left some donations for the poor, and several of her friends were remembered by small legacies. Among them Cecilia had her picture, and favourite trinkets, with a paragraph in her will, that as there was no one she so much loved, had her fortune been less splendid, she should have shared with her grand-daughters whatever she had to bestow.

Cecilia was much affected by this last and solemn remembrance. She more than ever coveted to be alone, that she might grieve undisturbed, and she lamented without ceasing the fatigue and the illness which, in so late a period, as it proved, of her life, she had herself been the means of occasioning to her.

Mr. Monckton had too much prudence to interrupt this desire of solitude, which indeed cost him little pain, as he considered her least in danger when alone. She received in about a week answers from both her guardians. Mr. Delvile's letter was closely to the purpose, without a word but of business, and couched in the haughtiest terms. As he had never, he said, acted, he had no accounts to send in; but as he was going to town in a few days, he would see her for a moment in the presence of Mr. Briggs, that a joint release might be signed, to prevent any future application to him.

Cecilia much lamented there was any necessity for her seeing him at all, and looked forward

forward to the interview as the greatest mortification she could suffer.

Mr. Briggs, though still more concise, was far kinder in his language: but he advised her to defer her scheme of taking the money into her own hands, assuring her she would be cheated, and had better leave it to him.

When she communicated these epistles to Mr. Monckton, he failed not to read, with an emphasis, by which his arrogant meaning was still more arrogantly enforced, the letter of Mr. Delvile aloud. Nor was he sparing in comments that might render it yet more offensive. Cecilia neither concurred in what he said, nor opposed it, but contented herself, when he was silent, with producing the other letter.

Mr. Monckton read not this with more favour. He openly attacked the character of Briggs, as covetous, rapacious, and overreaching, and warned her by no means to abide by his counsel, without first taking the opinion of some disinterested person. He then stated the various arts which might be practised upon her inexperience, enumerated the dangers to which her ignorance of business exposed her, and annotated upon the cheats, double dealings, and tricks of stock jobbing, to which he assured her Mr. Briggs owed all he was worth, till, perplexed and confounded, she declared herself at a loss how to proceed, and

and earnestly regretted that she could not have his counsel upon the spot.

This was his aim: to draw the wish from her, drew all suspicion of selfish views from himself: and he told her that he considered her present situation as so critical, the future confusion or regularity of her money transactions seeming to depend upon it, that he would endeavour to arrange his affairs for meeting her in London.

Cecilia gave him many thanks for the kind intention, and determined to be totally guided by him in the disposal and direction of her fortune.

Mean time he had now another part to act; he saw that with Cecilia nothing more remained to be done, and that, harbouring not a doubt of his motives, she thought his design in her favour did her nothing but honour; but he had too much knowledge of the world to believe it would judge him in the same manner, and too much consciousness of duplicity to set its judgment at defiance. To parry, therefore, the conjectures which might follow his attending her, he had already prepared Lady Margaret to wish herself of the party: for however disagreeable to him was her presence and her company, he had no other means to be under the same roof with Cecilia.

Miss Bennet, the wretched tool of his various schemes, and the mean sycophant of his lady,

lady, had been employed by him to work upon her jealousy, by secretly informing her of his intention to go to town, at the same time that Cecilia went thither to meet her guardians. She pretended to have learned this intelligence by accident, and to communicate it from respectful regard; and advised her to go to London herself at the same time, that she might see into his designs, and be some check upon his pleasure.

The encreasing infirmities of Lady Margaret made this counsel by no means palatable: but Miss Bennet, following the artful instructions which she received, put in her way so strong a motive, by assuring her how little her company was wished, that in the madness of her spite she determined upon the journey. And little heeding how she tormented herself while she had any view of tormenting Mr. Monckton, she was led on by her false confidant to invite Cecilia to her town house.

Mr. Monckton, in whom, by long practice, artifice was almost nature, well knowing his wife's perverseness, affected to look much disconcerted at the proposal; while Cecilia, by no means thinking it necessary to extend her compliance to such a punishment, instantly made an apology, and declined the invitation.

Lady Margaret, little versed in civility, and unused to the arts of persuasion, could not,

not, even for a favourite project, prevail upon herself to use entreaty, and therefore, thinking her scheme defeated, looked gloomily disappointed, and said nothing more.

Mr. Monckton saw with delight how much this difficulty inflamed her, though the moment he could speak alone with Cecilia he made it his care to remove it.

He represented to her that, however privately she might live, she was too young to be in London lodgings by herself, and gave an hint which she could not but understand, that in going or in staying with only servants, suspicions might soon be raised, that the plan and motive of her journey were different to those given out.

She knew that he meant to insinuate that it would be conjectured she designed to meet Delvile, and though colouring, vext, and provoked at the suggestion, the idea was sufficient to frighten her into his plan.

In a few days, therefore, the matter was wholly arranged, Mr. Monckton, by his skill and address, leading every one whither he pleased, while by the artful coolness of his manner, he appeared but to follow himself. He set out the day before, though earnestly wishing to accompany them, but having as yet in no single instance gone to town in the same carriage with Lady Margaret, he dared trust neither the neighbourhood nor the ser-

vants

vants with ſo dangerous a ſubject for their comments.

Cecilia, compelled thus to travel with only her Ladyſhip and Miſs Bennet, had a journey the moſt diſagreeable: and determined, if poſſible, to ſtay in London but two days. She had already fixed upon a houſe in which ſhe could board at Bury when ſhe returned, and there ſhe meant quietly to reſide till ſhe could enter her own.

Lady Margaret herſelf, exhilarated by a notion of having outwitted her huſband, was in unuſual good ſpirits, and almoſt in good humour. The idea of thwarting his deſigns, and being in the way of his entertainment, gave to her a delight ſhe had ſeldom received from any thing; and the belief that this was effected by the ſuperiority of her cunning, doubled her contentment, and raiſed it to exultation. She owed him, indeed, much provocation and uneaſineſs, and was happy in this opportunity of paying her arrears.

Mean while that conſummate maſter in every ſpecies of hypocriſy indulged her in this notion, by the air of diſſatisfaction with which he left the houſe. It was not that ſhe meant, by her preſence to obviate any impropriety: early and long acquainted with the character of Cecilia, ſhe well knew, that during her life the paſſion of her huſband

muſt

must be confined to his own breaſt: but conſcious of his averſion to herſelf, which ſhe reſented with the bittereſt ill-will, and knowing how little, at any time, he deſired her company, ſhe conſoled herſelf for her inability to give pleaſure by the power ſhe poſſeſſed of giving pain, and bore with the fatigue of a journey diſagreeable and inconvenient to her, with no other view than the hope of breaking into his plan of avoiding her. Little imagining that the whole time ſhe was forwarding his favourite purſuit, and only acting the part which he had appointed her to perform.

CHAP. VIII.

A SURPRISE.

LADY Margaret's town houſe was in Soho-Square; and ſcarcely had Cecilia entered it, before her deſire to ſpeed her departure, made her ſend a note to each of her guardians, acquainting them of her arrival, and begging, if poſſible, to ſee them the next day.

She had ſoon the two following anſwers:

To

To Miſs Cecilia Beverley.

Theſe.

November 8, 1779.

Miſs,

Received your's of the ſame date; can't come to-morrow. Will, Wedneſday the 10th,

Am, &c.

Jn°. Briggs.

Miſs Cecilia Beverley.

To Miſs Beverley.

Mr. Delvile has too many affairs of importance upon his hands, to make any appointment till ~~he has deliberated~~ how to arrange them. Mr Delvile will acquaint Miſs Beverley when it ſhall be in his power to ſee her.

St. James's-Square, Nov. 8.

Theſe characteriſtic letters, which at another time might have diverted Cecilia, now merely ſerved to torment her. She was eager to quit town, ſhe was more eager to have her meeting with Mr. Delvile over, who, oppreſſive to her even when he meant to be kind, ſhe foreſaw, now he was in wrath, would be imperious even to rudeneſs. Deſirous, however, to make one interview ſuffice for both, and to ſettle whatever buſineſs might

might remain unfinished by letters, she again wrote to Mr. Briggs, whom she had not spirits to encounter without absolute necessity, and informing him of Mr. Delvile's delay, begged he would not trouble himself to call till he heard from her again.

Two days passed without any message from them; they were spent chiefly alone, and very uncomfortably; Mr. Monckton being content to see little of her, while he knew she saw nothing of any body else. On the third morning, weary of her own thoughts, weary of Lady Margaret's ill-humoured looks, and still more weary of Miss Bennet's parasitical conversation, she determined, for a little relief to the heaviness of her mind, to go to her bookseller, and look over and order into the country such new publications as seemed to promise her any pleasure.

She sent, therefore, for a chair, and glad to have devised for herself any amusement, set out in it immediately.

Upon entering the shop, she saw the bookseller engaged in close conference with a man meanly dressed, and much muffled up, who seemed talking to him with uncommon earnestness, and just as she was approaching, said, "To terms I am indifferent, for writing is no labour to me; on the contrary, it is the first delight of my life, and therefore, and not for dirty pelf, I wish to make it my profession."

The

driven from it every body but Delvile, and those whom Delvile brought into it. But her regard for that amiable girl, though sunk in the busy scenes of her calamitous uncertainties, was only sunk in her own bosom, and ready, upon their removal, to revive with fresh vigour. She was now indeed more unhappy than even in the period of her forgetfulness, yet her mind was no longer filled with the restless turbulence of hope, which still more than despondency unfitted it for thinking of others.

This remembrance thus awakened, awakened also a desire of renewing the connection so long neglected. All scruples concerning Delvile had now lost their foundation, since the doubts from which they arose were both explained and removed; she was certain alike of his indifference to Henrietta, and his separation from herself; she knew that nothing was to be feared from painful or offensive rivalry, and she resolved, therefore, to lose no time in seeking the first pleasure to which since her disappointment she had voluntarily looked forward.

Early in the evening, she told Lady Margaret she was going out for an hour or two, and sending again for a chair, was carried to Portland-Street.

She enquired for Miss Belfield, and was shewn into a parlour, where she found her

another till ſuch time as they get huſbands: and then I'll warrant you they can meet without any ſalutation at all. That's my remark, at leaſt, and what I've ſeen of the world has set me upon making it."

This ſpeech led Cecilia to check, however artleſs, the tenderneſs of her fervent young friend, whom ſhe was much teazed by meeting in ſuch company, but who ſeemed not to dare underſtand the frequent looks which ſhe gave her expreſſive of a wiſh to be alone with her.

"Come, ladies," continued the facetious Mr. Hobſon, "what if we were all to ſit down and have a good diſh of tea? and ſuppoſe, Mrs. Belfield, you was to order us a freſh round of toaſt and butter? do you think the young ladies here would have any objection? and what if we were to have a little more water in the tea-kettle? not forgetting a little more tea in the tea-pot. What I ſay is this, let us all be comfortable; that's my notion of things."

"And a very good notion too," ſaid Mrs. Belfield, "for you have nothing to vex you. Ah, ma'am, you have heard, I ſuppoſe, about my ſon? gone off! nobody knows where! left that lord's houſe where he might have lived like a king, and gone out into the wide world nobody knows for what!"

"Indeed?" ſaid Cecilia, who, from ſeeing him in London, concluded he was again

perſon of buſineſs; he always deſpiſed it from a child, and come of it what may, I am ſure he was born to be a gentleman."

"As to his deſpiſing buſineſs," ſaid Mr. Hobſon, very contemptuouſly, "why ſo much the worſe, for buſineſs is no ſuch deſpiſeable thing. And if he had been brought up behind a counter, inſtead of dangling after theſe ſame Lords, why he might have had a houſe of his own over his head, and been as good a man as myſelf."

"A houſe over his head?" ſaid Mrs. Belfield, "why he might have had what he would, and have done what he would, if he had but followed my advice, and put himſelf a little forward. I have told him a hundred times to aſk ſome of thoſe great people he lived amongſt for a place at court, for I know they've ſo many they hardly know what to do with them, and it was always my deſign from the beginning that he ſhould be ſomething of a great man; but I never could perſuade him, though, for any thing I know, as I have often told him, if he had but had a little courage he might have been an Ambaſſador by this time. And now, all of a ſudden, to be gone nobody knows where!" —

"I am ſorry, indeed," ſaid Cecilia, who knew not whether moſt to pity or wonder at her blind folly; "but I doubt not you will hear of him ſoon."

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and then he may ask what lady he pleases — And when he's a mind of a lady, he should look upon a frown or two as nothing; for the ladies frown in courtship as a thing of course; it's just like a man's swearing at a coachman; why he's not a bit more in a passion, only he thinks he sha'n't be minded without it."

"Well, for my part," said Mrs. Belfield, "I am sure if I was a young lady, and most especially if I was a young lady of fortune, and all that, I should like a modest young gentleman, such as my son, for example, better by half than a bold swearing young fellow, that would make a point to have me whether I would or no"

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried Mr. Hobson; "but the young ladies are not of that way of thinking; they are all for a little life and spirit. Don't I say right, young ladies?"

Cecilia, who could not but perceive that these speeches were levelled at herself, felt offended and tired; and finding she had no chance of any private conversation with Henrietta, arose to take leave: but while she stopped her in the passage to enquire when she could see her alone, a footman knocked at the door, who, having asked if Mr. Belfield lodged there, and been answered in the affirmative, begged to know whether Miss Beverley was then in the house?

Cecilia, much surprised, went forward, and told him who she was.

"I have been, madam," said he, with a message to you at Mr. Monckton's, in Soho-Square: but nobody knew where you was; and Mr. Monckton came out and spoke to me himself, and said that all he could suppose was that you might be at this house. So he directed me to come here."

"And from whom, Sir, is your message?"

"From the honourable Mr. Delvile, madam, in St. James's-Square. He desires to know if you shall be at home on Saturday morning, the day after to-morrow, and whether you can appoint Mr. Briggs to meet him by twelve o'clock exactly, as he sha'n't be able to stay above three minutes."

Cecilia gave an answer as cold as the message; that she would be in Soho-Square at the time he mentioned, and acquaint Mr. Briggs of his intention.

The footman then went away; and Henrietta told her, that if she could call some morning she might perhaps contrive to be alone with her, and added, "indeed I wish much to see you, if you could possibly do me so great an honour; for I am very miserable, and have nobody to tell so! Ah, Miss Beverley! you that have so many friends, and that deserve as many again, you little know what a hard thing it is to have none!—but my brother's strange disappearing has half broke our hearts!"

Cecilia

Cecilia was beginning a conſolatory ſpeech, in which ſhe meant to give her private aſſurances of his health and ſafety, when ſhe was interrupted by Mr. Albany, who came ſuddenly into the paſſage.

Henrietta received him with a look of pleaſure, and enquired why he had ſo long been abſent; but, ſurpriſed by the ſight of Cecilia, he exclaimed, without anſwering her, "why didſt thou fail me? why appoint me to a place thou wert quitting thyſelf?—thou thing of fair profeſſions! thou inveigler of eſteem! thou vain, deluſive promiſer of pleaſure!"

"You condemn me too haſtily," ſaid Cecilia; "if I failed in my promiſe, it was not owing to caprice or inſincerity, but to a real and bitter misfortune which incapacitated me from keeping it. I ſhall ſoon, however,—nay, I am already at your diſpoſal, if you have any commands for me."

"I have always," anſwered he, "commands for the rich, for I have always compaſſion for the poor."

"Come to me, then, at Mr. Monckton's in Soho-Square," cried ſhe, and haſtened into her chair, impatient to end a conference which ſhe ſaw excited the wonder of the ſervants, and which alſo now drew out from the parlour Mr. Hobſon and Mrs. Belfield. She then kiſſed her hand to Henrietta, and ordered the chairmen to carry her home.

It had not been without difficulty that ſhe had reſtrained herſelf from mentioning what ſhe knew of Belfield, when ſhe found his mother and ſiſter in a ſtate of ſuch painful uncertainty concerning him. But her utter ignorance of his plans, joined to her undoubted knowledge of his wiſh of concealment, made her fear doing miſchief by officiouſneſs, and think it wiſer not to betray what ſhe had ſeen of him, till better informed of his own views and intentions. Yet, willing to ſhorten a ſuſpence ſo uneaſy to them, ſhe determined to entreat Mr. Monckton would endeavour to find him out, and acquaint him with their anxiety.

That gentleman, when ſhe returned to his houſe, was in a ſtate of mind by no means enviable. Miſſing her at tea, he had aſked Miſs Bennet where ſhe was, and hearing ſhe had not left word, he could ſcarce conceal his chagrin. Knowing, however, how few were her acquaintances in town, he ſoon concluded ſhe was with Miſs Belfield; but, not ſatisfied with ſending Mr. Delvile's meſſenger after her, he privately employed one in whom he truſted for himſelf, to make enquiries at the houſe, without ſaying whence he came.

But though this man was returned, and he knew her ſafety, he ſtill felt alarmed; he had flattered himſelf, from the length of

time

time in which she had now done nothing without consulting him, she would scarce even think of any action, without his previous concurrence. And he had hoped, by a little longer use, to make his counsel become necessary, which he knew to be a very short step from rendering it absolute.

Nor was he well pleased to perceive, by this voluntary excursion, a struggle to cast off her sadness, and a wish to procure herself entertainment: it was not that he desired her misery, but he was earnest that all relief from it should spring from himself: and though far from displeased that Delvile should lose his sovereignty over her thoughts, he was yet of opinion that, till his own liberty was restored, he had less to apprehend from grief indulged, than grief allayed; one could but lead her to repining retirement, the other might guide her to a consolatory rival.

He well knew, however, it was as essential to his cause to disguise his disappointments as his expectations, and, certain that by pleasing alone he had any chance of acquiring power, he cleared up when Cecilia returned, who as unconscious of feeling, as of owing any subjection to him, preserved uncontrolled the right of acting for himself, however desirous and glad of occasional instruction.

by the reſtoration of a brother ſo much loved and ſo regretted.

She ſent, mean time, to Mr. Briggs the meſſage ſhe had received from Mr. Delville, and had the ſatisfaction of an anſwer that he would obſerve the appointment.

CHAP. IX.

A CONFABULATION.

THE next morning, while the family were at breakfaſt, Belfield, according to his promiſe, made his viſit.

A high colour overſpread his face as he entered the room, reſulting from a ſenſation of grief at his fallen fortune, and ſhame at his altered appearance, which though he endeavoured to cover under an air of gaiety and unconcern, gave an awkwardneſs to his manners, and a viſible diſtreſs to his countenance: Mr. Monckton received him with pleaſure, and Cecilia, who ſaw the conflict of his philoſophy with his pride, dreſſed her features once more in ſmiles, which, however faint and heartleſs, ſhewed her deſire to re-aſſure him. Miſs Bennet, as uſual when not called upon by the maſter or Lady of the houſe, ſat as a cypher; and Lady Margaret, always diſagreeable and repulſive

repulsive to the friends of her husband: though she was not now more than commonly ungracious, struck the quick-feeling and irritable Belfield, to wear an air of such superiority meant to reproach him with his disgrace.

This notion, which strongly affected him, made him, for one instant, hesitate whether he should remain another in the same room with her: but the friendliness of Mr. Monckton, and the gentleness and good-breeding of Cecilia, seemed so studious to make amends for her moroseness, that he checked his too ready indignation, and took his seat at the table. Yet was it some time before he could recover even the assumed vivacity which this suspected insult had robbed him of, sufficiently to enter into conversation with any appearance of ease or pleasure. But, after a while, soothed by the attentions of Cecilia and Mr. Monckton, his uneasiness wore off, and the native spirit and liveliness of his character broke forth with their accustomed energy.

"This good company, I hope," said he, addressing himself, however, only to Cecilia, "will not so much *mistake the thing* as to criticise my dress of this morning; since it is perfectly according to rule, and to rule established from time immemorial: but lest any of you should so much err as to fancy shabby what is only characteristic, I

must

result endeavour to be beforehand with the malice of conjecture, and have the honour to inform you, that I am enlisted in the Grub-Street regiment, of the third story, and under the tattered banner of scribbling volunteers! a race which, if it boasts not the courage of heroes, at least equals them in enmity. This coat, therefore, is merely the uniform of my corps, and you will all, I hope, respect it as emblematical of wit and erudition."

"We must at least respect you," said Cecilia, "who thus gaily can sport with it."

"Ah, madam!" said he, more seriously, "it is not from you I ought to look for respect! I must appear to you the most unsteady and coward-hearted of beings. But lately I blushed to see you from poverty, though more worthily employed than when I had been seen by you in affluence; that shame vanquished, another equally narrow took its place, and yesterday I blushed again that you detected me in a new pursuit, though I had only quitted my former one from a conviction it was ill chosen. There seems in human nature a worthlessness not to be conquered! yet I will struggle with it to the last, and either die in the attempt, or dare seem that which I am, without adding to the miseries of life the sting, the envenomed sting, of dastardly false shame!"

"Your language is wonderfully altered within

within this twelvemonth," said Mr. Monckton; "the *worthlessness of human nature!* the *miseries of life!* this from you! so lately the champion of human nature, and the panegyrist of human life!"

"Soured by personal disappointment," answered, he "I may perhaps speak with too much acrimony; yet, ultimately, my opinions have not much changed. Happiness is given to us with more liberality than we are willing to confess; it is judgment only that is deale us sparingly, and of that we have so little, that when felicity is before us, we turn to the right or left, or when at the right or left, we proceed strait forward. It has been so with me; I have sought it at a distance, amidst difficulty and danger, when all that I could wish has been immediately within my grasp."

"It must be owned," said Mr. Monckton, "after what you have suffered from this world you were wont to defend, there is little reason to wonder at some change in your opinion."

"Yet whatever have been my sufferings," he answered, "I have generally been involved in them by my own rashness or caprice. My last enterprise especially, from which my expectations were highest, was the most ill-judged of any. I considered not how little my way of life had fitted me for the experiment I was making, how irreparably I was enervated by long sedentary habits, and how insuf-

ficient

ficient for bodily ſtrength was mental reſolution. We may fight againſt partial prejudices, and by ſpirit and fortitude we may overcome them; but it will not do to war with the general tenor of education. We may blame, deſpiſe, regret as we pleaſe, but cuſtoms long eſtabliſhed, and habits long indulged, aſſume an empire deſpotic, though their power is but preſcriptive. Oppoſing them is vain; Nature herſelf, when forced aſide, is not more elaſtic in her rebound."

"Will you not then," ſaid Cecilia, "ſince your experiment has failed, return again to your family, and to the plan of life you formerly ſettled?"

"You ſpeak of them together," ſaid he, with a ſmile, "as if you thought them inſeparable; and indeed my own apprehenſion they would be deemed ſo, has made me thus fear to ſee my friends, ſince I love not reſiſtance, yet cannot again attempt the plan of life they would have me purſue. I have given up my cottage, but my independance is as dear to me as ever; and all that I have gathered from experience, is to maintain it by thoſe employments for which my education has fitted me, inſtead of ſeeking it injudiciouſly by the very road for which it has unqualified me."

"And what is this independence," cried Mr. Monckton, "which has thus bewitched your imagination? a mere idle dream of romance

mance and enthusiasm; without existence in nature, without possibility in life. In uncivilised countries, or in lawless times, independence, for a while, may perhaps stalk abroad: but in a regular government, 'tis only the vision of a heated brain; one part of a community must inevitably hang upon another, and 'tis a farce to call either independent, when to break the chain by which they are linked would prove destruction to both. The soldier wants not the officer more than the officer the soldier; nor the tenant the landlord, more than the landlord the tenant. The rich owe their distinction, their luxuries, to the poor, as much as the poor owe their rewards, their necessaries, to the rich."

"Man treated as an automaton," answered Belfield, "and considered merely with respect to his bodily operations, may indeed be called dependent, since the food by which he lives, or, rather, without which he dies, cannot wholly be cultivated and prepared by his own hands: but considered in a nobler sense, he deserves not the degrading epithet. I speak of him, then, as a being of feeling and understanding, with pride to alarm, with nerves to tremble, with honour to satisfy, and with a soul to be immortal!—as such, may he not claim the freedom of his own thoughts? may not that claim be extended to the liberty of speaking, and the power of being governed by them? and when thoughts, words, and actions

actions are exempt from control, will you brand him with dependency merely because the grazier feeds his meat, and the baker kneads his bread?"

"But who is there in the whole world," said Mr. Monckton, "extensive as it is, and dissimilar as are its inhabitants, that can pretend to assert, his thoughts, words, and actions are exempt from control? even where interest, which you so much disdain, interferes not,—though where that is I confess I cannot tell!—are we not kept silent where we wish to reprove by the fear of offending? and made speak where wish to be silent by the desire of obliging? do we not bow to the scoundrel as low as to the man of honour? are we not by mere forms kept standing when tired? made give place to those we despise? and smiles to those we hate? or if we refuse these attentions, are we not regarded as savages, and shut out of society?"

"All these," answered Belfield, "are so merely matters of ceremony, that the concession can neither cost pain to the proud, nor give pleasure to the vain. The bow is to the coat, the attention is to the rank, and the fear of offending ought to extend to all mankind. Homage such as this infringes not our sincerity, since it is as much a matter of course as the dress that we wear, and has as little reason to flatter a man as the shadow which follows him. I no more, therefore, hold him deceitful

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"'Tis a knight-errantry," anſwered Belfield, laughing, "which, however ludicrous it may ſeem to you, requires more ſoul and more brains than any other. Our giants may, indeed, be only wind-mills, but they muſt be attacked with as much ſpirit, and conquered with as much bravery, as any fort or any town, in time of war ſhould be demoliſhed; and though the ſiege, I muſt confeſs, may be of leſs national utility, the aſſailants of the quill have their honour as much at heart as the aſſailants of the ſword."

"I ſuppoſe, then," ſaid Monckton, archly, "if a man wants a biting lampoon, or an handſome panegyric, ſome news-paper ſcandal, or a ſonnet for a lady—"

"No, no," interrupted Belfield eagerly, "if you imagine me a hireling ſcribbler for the purpoſes of defamation or of flattery, you as little know my ſituation as my character. My ſubjects ſhall be my own, and my ſatire ſhall be general. I would as much diſdain to be perſonal with an anonymous pen, as to attack an unarmed man in the dark with a dagger I had kept concealed."

A reply of rallying incredulity was riſing to the lips of Mr. Monckton, when reading in the looks of Cecilia an entire approbation of this ſentiment, he checked his deſire of ridicule, and exclaimed, "ſpoken like a man of honour, and one whoſe works may profit the world!"

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"From my earliest youth to the present hour," continued Belfield, "literature has been the favourite object of my pursuit, my recreation in leisure, and my hope in employment. My propensity to it, indeed, has been so ungovernable, that I may properly call it the source of my several miscarriages throughout life. It was the bar to my preferment, for it gave me a distaste to other studies; it was the cause of my unsteadiness in all my undertakings, because to all I preferred it. It has sunk me to distress, it has involved me in difficulties; it has brought me to the brink of ruin by making me neglect the means of living, yet never, till now, did I discern it might itself be my support."

"I am heartily glad, Sir," said Cecilia, "your various enterprizes and struggles have at length ended in a project which promises you so much satisfaction. But you will surely suffer your sister and your mother to partake of it? for who is there that your prosperity will make so happy?"

"You do them infinite honour, madam, by taking any interest in their affairs; but to own to you the truth, what to me appears prosperity, will to them wear another aspect. They have looked forward to my elevation with expectations the most improbable, and thought every thing within my grasp, with a simplicity incredible. But though their hopes were absurd, I am pained by their disappointment,

ment, and I have not courage to meet their tears, which I am sure will not be spared when they see me."

"'Tis from tenderness, then," said Cecilia, half smiling, "that you are cruel; and from affection to your friends that you make them believe you have forgotten them?"

There was a delicacy in this reproach exactly suited to work upon Belfield, who feeling it with quickness, started up, and cried, "I believe I am wrong!—I will go to them this moment!"

Cecilia felt eager to second the generous impulse; but Mr. Monckton, laughing at his impetuosity, insisted he should first finish his breakfast.

"Your friends," said Cecilia, "can have no mortification so hard to bear as your voluntary absence; and if they see but that you are happy, they will soon be reconciled to whatever situation you may choose."

"Happy!" repeated he, with animation, "O, I am in paradise! I am come from a region in the first rude state of nature, to civilization and refinement! the life I led at the cottage was the life of a savage; no intercourse with society, no consolation from books; my mind locked up, every source dried of intellectual delight, and no enjoyment in my power but from sleep and from food. Weary of an existence which thus levelled me with a brute, I grew ashamed of the approxi-

tion of dark and perpetual ignorance. The approach, however, of winter, brought me acquainted with my miſtake. It grew cold, it grew bleak; little guarded againſt the inclemency of the weather, I felt its ſeverity in every limb, and miſſed a thouſand indulgencies which in poſſeſſion I had never valued. To riſe at break of day, chill, freezing, and comfortleſs! no ſun abroad, no fire at home! to go out in all weather to work, that work rough, coarſe, and laborious!—unuſed to ſuch hardſhips, I found I could not bear them, and however unwillingly, was compelled to relinquiſh the attempt."

Breakfaſt now being over, he again aroſe to take leave.

"You are going then, Sir," ſaid Cecilia, "immediately to your friends?"

"No, madam," anſwered he, heſitating, "not juſt this moment; to-morrow morning, perhaps,—but it is now late, and I have buſineſs for the reſt of the day."

"Ah, Mr. Monckton!" cried Cecilia, "what miſchief have you done by occaſioning this delay!"

"This goodneſs, madam," ſaid Belfield, "my ſiſter can never ſufficiently acknowledge. But I will own, that though, juſt now, in a warm moment, I felt eager to preſent myſelf to her and my mother, I rather wiſh, now I am cooler, to be ſaved the pain of telling them in perſon my ſituation. I mean, therefore, firſt to write to them."

out wanting steadiness and prudence, he can neither act with consistency nor prosper with continuance."

"He is well enough," said Lady Margaret, who had heard the whole argument in sullen taciturnity, "he is well enough, I say; and there comes no good from young women's being so difficult."

Cecilia, offended by a speech which implied a rude desire to dispose of her, went up stairs to her own room; and Mr. Monckton, always enraged when young men and Cecilia were alluded to in the same sentence, retired to his library.

She then ordered a chair, and went to Portland-Street, to fulfil what she had offered to Belfield, and to revive his mother and sister by the pleasure of the promised interview.

She found them together: and her intelligence being of equal consequence to both, she did not now repine at the presence of Mrs. Belfield. She made her communication with the most cautious attention to their characters, softening the ill she had to relate with respect to Belfield's present way of living, by endeavouring to awaken affection and joy from the prospect of the approaching meeting. She counselled them as much as possible to restrain their chagrin at his misfortunes, which he would but construe into reproach of his ill management; and she represented that when once he was restored to his family, he might

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